

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST,

In which the History of the Passion, as given by
the Four Evangelists, is connected, harmonised,
and explained.

By J. RAMBACH,

Late Professor of Divinity in the University of GIESSEN.

Translated from the last Edition of the German.

VOLUME the THIRD.

CONTAINING,

CHRIST'S Sufferings on Mount Golgotha.

LONDON:

Printed for A. LINDE, Bookseller to her Royal Highness
the Princess of WALES, in Catharine-Street in
the Strand.

MDCCLIX.

CONTENTS

TO THE

THIRD VOLUME.

THE Sufferings of Christ on Mount Golgotha,
Page i

CONSIDERATION I.

The Lord Jesus led to his Crucifixion, 9

CONSIDERATION II.

*The last penitential Sermon of the Lord Jesus ;
as it was explained in a discourse preached on
a day of public humiliation in the year 1725,*
31

CONSIDERATION III.

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, 57

CONSIDERATION IV.

*The sacrifice of Isaac, a type of the great sacrifice
and crucifixion of Christ,* 81

CONSIDERATION V.

*Two remarkable occurrences which followed the
crucifixion of Christ,* 100

CONSIDERATION VI.

The mental sufferings of Jesus Christ on the Cross,
128

VOL. III.

A

CON-

CONTENTS.

CONSIDERATION VII.

*The gifts conferred by the Lord Jesus, while he
hung on the Cross,* Page 152

CONSIDERATION VIII.

The last sufferings of the Lord Jesus, 178

CONSIDERATION IX.

The last Hours of the Lord Jesus, 201

CONSIDERATION X.

*The prodigies which happened at the death of the
Lord Jesus,* 232

CONSIDERATION XI.

*The last indignity offered to the body of the Lord
Jesus on the Cross,* 259

CONSIDERATION XII.

*The blood of the sacrifice of atonement a type of
the blood of Jesus Christ,* 280

CONSIDERATION XIII.

*The water which flowed from the rock, a type
of the water which issued forth from our
Saviour's side,* 295

CONSIDERATION XIV.

*The last Honours paid to the Body of the Lord
Jesus,* 307

CONSIDERATION XV.

The burial of the Lord Jesus, 330

APPENDIX.

*The Prince of Life condemned to death. A Fast
Sermon preached at Jena, in Lent, 1721,* 359



THE
S U F F E R I N G S
O F
C H R I S T
On Mount GOLGOTHA.

The accounts given by the four Evangelists (a),
connected and harmonised.

‘ **W** H E N the soldiers took off the
‘ purple robe from Jesus, and put
‘ his own raiment on him, and led
‘ him away to crucify him. And Jesus
‘ went forth, bearing his Cross. And there
‘ were also two malefactors led with him, to
‘ be put to death. And as they led Jesus away,

(a) Matt. xxvii. 31—66. Mark xv. 20—47. Luke xxiii.
26—56. John xix. 16—42.

VOL. III.

B

‘ they

‘ they found a man of Cyrene Simon by name,
‘ the father of Alexander and Rufus, who passed
‘ by, coming out of the country: And they laid
‘ hold on him, and compelled him to bear his
‘ cross; and on him they laid the Cross, that
‘ he might bear it after Jesus.

‘ And there followed him a great company of
‘ people, and of women who also bewailed and
‘ lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them,
‘ said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for
‘ me; but weep for yourselves, and for your
‘ children. For, behold, the days are coming,
‘ in the which they shall say, Blessed are the
‘ barren, and the wombs that never bare, and
‘ the paps that never gave suck. Then shall
‘ they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us,
‘ and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do
‘ these things in a green tree, what shall be done
‘ in the dry?

‘ And they bring him unto a place, called in
‘ the Hebrew Golgotha, which is, being inter-
‘ preted, the Place of a skull. And they gave
‘ him to drink vinegar [or sour wine] mingled
‘ with myrrhe and gall: and when he had tasted
‘ thereof, he would not drink; and he received
‘ it not. And they crucified him there, and
‘ two other malefactors with him, one on the
‘ right hand, and the other on the left, and
‘ Jesus in the midst. And the Scripture was
‘ fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered
‘ with the transgressors. Then said Jesus, Fa-
‘ ther, forgive them; for they know not what
‘ they do.

‘ And

‘ And Pilate wrote a superscription of his accusation, and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief Priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, the King of the Jews; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts (to every soldier a part) and also his coat: Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be. And they cast lots upon it, what every man should take; that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. And sitting down, they watched him there; and it was about the third hour when they crucified him.

‘ And the people stood beholding; and they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief Priests, mocking him with the Scribes and Elders,

‘ said, He saved others, himself he cannot save.
‘ If he be the Christ, the King of Israel, the
‘ chosen of God, let him save himself, and now
‘ come down from the Cross, that we may see
‘ it, and we will believe him. He trusted in
‘ God, let him deliver him now, if he will have
‘ him; for he said, I am the Son of God. And
‘ the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him
‘ and offering him vinegar; and saying, If thou
‘ be the King of the Jews, save thyself. The
‘ thieves also, who were crucified with him,
‘ cast the same in his teeth. And one of the
‘ malefactors, who were hanged, railed on
‘ him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself
‘ and us.

‘ But the other answering, rebuked him, say-
‘ ing, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art
‘ in the same condemnation? And we indeed
‘ justly: for we receive the due reward of our
‘ deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.
‘ And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me
‘ when thou comest into thy kingdom. And
‘ Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee,
‘ To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. Now
‘ there stood by the Cross of Jesus, his mother,
‘ and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cle-
‘ ophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus
‘ therefore saw his mother, and the disciple
‘ standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto
‘ his Mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then
‘ saith he to the disciple, Behold thy Mother!
‘ And from that hour that disciple took her unto
‘ his own home.

‘ Now

‘ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness
 ‘ over all the land until the ninth hour ; and the
 ‘ sun was darkened. And about the ninth
 ‘ hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, *Eli, Eli,*
 ‘ *lama asabtbani*, that is to say, My God ! my
 ‘ God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? Some of
 ‘ them that stood there, when they heard that,
 ‘ said, Behold, This man calleth for Elias. Af-
 ‘ ter this, Jesus knowing that all things were
 ‘ now accomplished, that the Scripture might be
 ‘ fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a
 ‘ vessel full of vinegar : And one ran, and took
 ‘ a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put
 ‘ it upon hyssop and stuck it on a reed, and held
 ‘ it to his mouth, and gave him to drink. The
 ‘ rest said, Let be ; let us see whether Elias will
 ‘ come to save him, and take him down. Now
 ‘ when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said,
 ‘ It is finished. And he again cried with a loud
 ‘ voice, and said, Father, into thy hands I com-
 ‘ mend my spirit : And having said this, he
 ‘ bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

‘ And behold, the vail of the temple was rent
 ‘ in twain from the top to the bottom, and the
 ‘ earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the
 ‘ graves were opened, and the bodies of many
 ‘ Saints who slept arose, and came out of the
 ‘ graves after his Resurrection, and went into
 ‘ the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now
 ‘ when the Centurion who stood over against
 ‘ him, and they that were with him watching
 ‘ Jesus, saw that he so cried out, and the earth-
 ‘ quake, and those things that were done ; they

‘ feared greatly, and glorified God, saying, Cer-
‘ tainly this was a righteous man; truly this was
‘ the Son of God. And all the people that
‘ came together to that sight, beholding the
‘ things which were done, smote their breasts,
‘ and returned. And all his acquaintance, and
‘ the women that had followed him from Gali-
‘ lee, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and
‘ Mary the mother of James the less, and the
‘ mother of Joses, and Salome, and the mother
‘ of Zebedee’s children, who also when he was
‘ in Galilee followed him and ministered unto
‘ him, and many other women who came up
‘ with him to Jerusalem, stood a far off behold-
‘ ing these things.

‘ The Jews, therefore, because it was the
‘ Preparation, that the bodies should not re-
‘ main upon the Cross on the sabbath day,
‘ (for that sabbath day was an high day,) be-
‘ sought Pilate that their legs might be broken,
‘ and that they might be taken away. Then
‘ came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the
‘ first, and of the other, who was crucified with
‘ him. But when they came to Jesus, and
‘ saw that he was dead already, they brake not
‘ his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear
‘ pierced his side; and forthwith came there
‘ out blood and water. And he that saw it
‘ bare record, and his record is true; for these
‘ things were done, that this Scripture should be
‘ fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken:
‘ And again another Scripture saith, They shall
‘ look on him whom they pierced.

‘ And

‘ And now, when the even was come, be-
‘ cause it was the Preparation, that is, the day
‘ before the sabbath, came a rich man of Ari-
‘ mathea, a city of the Jews, named Joseph;
‘ he was an honourable counsellor, and a good
‘ man and a just. The same had not consented
‘ to the counsel and deed of them, who also
‘ was a disciple of Jesus (but secretly for fear
‘ of the Jews) and waited for the kingdom of
‘ God. He went in boldly unto Pilate, and be-
‘ sought him that he might take away the body
‘ of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were
‘ already dead; and calling unto him the Cen-
‘ turion, he asked him, Whether he had been
‘ any while dead? And when he knew it of the
‘ Centurion, he gave the body of Jesus to Jo-
‘ seph, and commanded it to be delivered to
‘ him. And Joseph bought fine linen. And
‘ there came also Nicodemus, who at the first
‘ came unto Jesus by night, and brought a mix-
‘ ture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred
‘ pound weight. Then took they the body of
‘ Jesus, and wrapped it in the clean linen, and
‘ wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as
‘ the manner of the Jews is to bury.

‘ Now in the place where he was crucified,
‘ there was a garden, and in the garden a new
‘ sepulchre hewn out of a rock, wherein never
‘ man before was laid. Here laid they Jesus,
‘ therefore, because of the Jews Preparation day;
‘ for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. And they
‘ rolled a great stone to the door of the sepul-
‘ chre, and departed. And the women also, who

' came with him from Galilee, followed after.
 ' Among these were Mary Magdalene, and
 ' Mary the Mother of Joses, who sat over against
 ' the sepulchre, and beheld how, and where,
 ' his body was laid. And they returned, and
 ' prepared spices and ointments, and rested the
 ' sabbath day, according to the commandment.
 ' Now the next day that followed the day of
 ' the Preparation, the chief Priests and Pharisees
 ' came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we re-
 ' member that That Deceiver said, while he was
 ' yet alive, After three days I will rise again.
 ' Command therefore, that the sepulchre be
 ' made sure until the third day, lest his disci-
 ' ples come by night and steal him away, and
 ' say unto the people, He is risen from the
 ' dead: So the last error shall be worse than the
 ' first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch;
 ' go your way, make it as sure as you can.
 ' So they went, and made the sepulchre sure,
 ' sealing the stone, and setting a watch.'

The PREPARATORY PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour, who wast crucified in
 weakness, but now livest in power, and
 canst for ever save all those who come to God
 through thee; It is our purpose now to consider
 the concluding scene of thy sufferings on mount
 Golgotha. O thou crucified Love! be pleased to
 favour this our weak attempt, and make it
 conducive to the glory of thy name. Give us
 a lively sense of our incapacity so to conduct these
 Con-

Considerations, that they may be a real benefit and blessing to us. Grant that this sense of our weakness may awaken in us an earnest desire of the Divine assistance, and the influence of thy Spirit; and satisfy this desire, by giving us all those talents and graces, which thou thyself knowest to be necessary towards an edifying consideration of thy sufferings. Amen.

CONSIDERATION I.

The LORD JESUS led to his Crucifixion.

IN the preceding Considerations, we have discoursed of the several sufferings which our dear Mediator, for our sins, endured on the Mount of Olives; before the spiritual court of the Jews; and the civil tribunal of Pilate and Herod.

It now remains, that we consider his sufferings on Mount Golgotha, the place appointed by the infinite wisdom of God for the conclusion of our blessed Lord's meritorious afflictions. The beginning of this remarkable transaction runs thus.

' (a) Then the soldiers took the purple robe off from Jesus, and put his own raiment
' on him, and led him away to crucify him.
' And Jesus went forth, bearing his Cross.
' And there were also two other malefactors

(a) Matth. xxvii. 31, 32. Mark xv. 20, 21. Luke xxiii. 26—32. John xix. 16, 17.

' led with him, to be put to death. And as
 ' they led Jesus away, they found a man of
 ' Cyrene Simon by name, the father of Alex-
 ' ander and Rufus, who passed by, coming out
 ' of the country: And they laid hold on him,
 ' and compelled him to bear his cross; and on
 ' him they laid the Cross, that he might bear
 ' it after Jesus. And there followed him a great
 ' company of people, and of women who also
 ' bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turn-
 ' ing unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem,
 ' weep not for me; but weep for yourselves,
 ' and for your children, &c.

These words exhibit to us the mournful pro-
 cession of the blessed Jesus to his crucifixion.
 Our blessed Lord had, in his former sufferings,
 been forced to take several painful and igno-
 minious walks. From the mount of Olives
 he had been hurried, bound as a prisoner, to An-
 nas; from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas
 to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod
 back again to Pilate; and consequently, he may
 be supposed to have passed through most of the
 streets in Jerusalem. Now our blessed Saviour
 was to take his last mournful walk, when he
 was led as a malefactor from Pilate's house to
 the place of execution.

Jesus was led away immediately after sentence
 had been pronounced on him by Pilate. 'Then'
 (b), *i. e.* immediately after this, Pilate delivered
 him up to the Roman soldiers, in order to be
 crucified; for among the Romans, the soldiers

(b) John xix. 16.

were

were usually the executioners in such cases. The Roman Emperor Tiberius, who then sat on the throne, had, about seven years before, issued an order, That no criminal should be executed until ten days after sentence had been pronounced upon him *. But the benefit of this edict did not extend to murderers and rebels; it being judged necessary for the public tranquillity that such delinquents should be immediately put to death. Our blessed Saviour therefore was not intitled to this privilege; for he had been indicted as a mover of sedition and a rebel, and one whom the Jews were for sending out of the world with all possible dispatch, as a pest to the common-wealth, and a scandal to the Jewish church. Nay, they urged the Roman Governor with such vehemence, that he was obliged to give orders for the immediate execution of the sentence. No one offered to prepare Jesus for death; no one interposed in his favour, or spoke a word of exhortation or comfort to him; but he was dragged away to death with the utmost precipitancy, as one that was past all hopes of amendment, and unworthy of the notice of the humane and charitable. He, indeed, stood in no need of comfort or preparation for death; for he was long

* Sic TACITUS, *Annal.* Lib. III. Cap. 51. Igitur factum Senatûs-consultum, ne decreta Patrum ante diem *decimum* ad ærarium deferrenter; idque vitæ spatium damnatis prorogaretur. Et SÆTONIUS in Tiberio Cap. LXXV. Senatûs-consulto cautum erat, ut poena damnatorum in *decimum* semper diem differretur.

since prepared for it, by his patient submission and willingness to suffer; but he denied himself all human comforts, that he might acquire for us a right to expect divine consolations in our last hours. By the precipitancy with which he was led to death, he moved his heavenly Father to grant to every one, in his preparation for death, as much time as would be necessary; and has likewise sanctified the sufferings of his faithful servants, when they are suddenly surprized by the impatient barbarity of their persecutors, who allow them no time for recollection, or preparation for death. Thus every circumstance of our blessed Saviour's sufferings is a source of comfort and blessing to his followers.

But now let us take a nearer view of the last mournful Walk of the blessed Jesus, to his execution. By the above account we may see,

First, How, and in what manner, he was led to Golgotha.

Secondly, The Company which attended him thither.

Thirdly, What happened to him by the way.

Fourthly, What our blessed Lord said, as he was led to his crucifixion.

I.

As to the manner in which our blessed Saviour was led away to execution, the Evangelical History informs us, that he was clothed in his own raiment, and bore his Cross. That he was led away clothed in his own raiment, we are

are told by St. Matthew and St. Mark, in these words: ' Then the soldiers took the purple robe off from Jesus, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.' The Lord Jesus had, a little before, among other mockeries and insults he endured in Pilate's judgment-hall, been dressed up in an old purple mantle; and in this garb he was afterwards led away, and made a show of to the whole Jewish people, as a mock King. But now as he was to be carried to the place of execution, the soldiers took off from him this purple mantle, and put on him his own upper garment *, that he might be the more easily known by the spectators; since it is probable, that his sacred face was so swelled, and disfigur'd by blood, &c. that very few, who had even seen him before, would have known that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was led to execution. The wreath of thorns very probably remained on his head, as a public mark that the crime for which he was crucified was, That he had, in a seditious manner, according to the superscription over his head, given himself out to be the King of the Jews. The purple robe was left behind in the Judgment-hall. But as this robe must probably in some parts have stuck to his body, now all bloody, and cruelly torn by scourging; the tak-

* Judice enim STEPHANO LE MOYNE, *ad Varia Sacra* pag. 319. per enallagen ἱματία vestes ponuntur pro veste, seu pallio superiori, quod, quum ex quatuor pannis esset compositum, rectè voce pluralis numeri hoc loco designatur Conf. Marc. V. 27. Joh. XII. 4.

ing it off from our blessed Lord, in a rude manner, afforded new matter of sport to the insolent soldiers, as it must have caused very sensible pain to the Lord Jesus, by tearing open his stripes and wounds. So dearly did it cost the Son of God to recover for us the original garment of spotless innocence! Oh, that we may never put on our apparel, without thinking of this painful unclothing of our blessed Saviour! Certainly, such a consideration must be a powerful check to suppress in us all proud, wanton, and aspiring thoughts.

The Lord Jesus being again clothed in his own raiment, the Cross was laid on his shoulders; and thus was he obliged himself to carry that heavy piece of timber on which he was to be crucified to Golgotha. It was a custom among the Romans, that the criminal who was to be crucified, usually carried his own cross to the place of execution. But as the Cross consisted of a long beam of timber, and a short transverse piece, the Criminal, in carrying the Cross, had his arms extended, and the transverse piece fastened to them; while the long beam was laid on his back parallel to his body, so that he dragged the lower end of it after him on the ground. To this the blessed Jesus alludes, when he forewarns Peter, that he should one day be crucified; 'When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not (c).' And in this manner, we may suppose that Jesus was obliged to

(c) John xxi. 18.

carry his Cross. His extended Arms were bound to the transverse beam, so that he was forced to exert all his strength in order to drag the whole Cross after him. Thus, as St. John observes, he went forth bearing his Cross. He had from his childhood bore it on his heart; but now he first bears it on his sacred shoulders, while pain and ignominy attended his weary steps in this mournful walk. How often must our blessed Saviour's knees, already so spent and enfeebled as to be scarce able to bear his own body, have sunk under this oppressive weight! At the same time, to drag after him that instrument of punishment on which he was to be crucified, as an abhorrence and execration to all the people, was a circumstance of the most sensible reproach and ignominy. Oh, the inconceivable depth of the humiliation of the Son of God, who goes forth in the appearance of a wretched slave condemned to death, and bearing his own Cross! Nay, this was the more painful to our blessed Saviour, who was the surety of mankind, as it was a peculiar punishment of sin; so that on this Cross he was to become a curse for us, to be forsaken of God, and as it were to taste the bitterness of eternal death. From this circumstance of our Saviour's passion, we shall deduce the following truths.

1. The mournful walk of our blessed Lord to the place of his crucifixion, has been productive of many comforts and blessings to mankind.

Every step in this painful walk was marked with blood; but at the same time, every step
dropped

dropped down comfort to our souls: Many painful, weary steps did the blessed Jesus take in his sufferings for our sake ; but all would have availed us nothing, had he not determined on this last sorrowful walk. We were all under sentence of death ; and this sentence could no other way be reversed, than by our Mediator's suffering himself to be led to death in our stead. To this he has submitted with the most cheerful willingness and complacency. Our blessed Lord said to Peter, ' Another shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not (*d*),' that is, contrary to thy natural inclination. But the Son of God was able to say to his Father, ' Lo ! I come : ' I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy ' law is within my Heart (*e*). ' He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He suffered himself to be led out of the earthly Jerusalem, to procure an entrance for us into the heavenly Jerusalem. He submitted to be led as a Sheep to the slaughter, that the precious souls of men might not be dragged as oxen to the slaughter by sin, the world, and the devil. The evil spirits would have dragged thee, O wretched sinner, from the grave to Judgment, and from thence to the infernal lake, according to the sentence passed on thee at the tribunal of God. But since thy Redeemer was thus voluntarily led away to his death, thou wilt never be led away by the powers of hell. For if thou dost believe in the Name of the Son of God, and givest thyself up diligently to follow him, and

(*d*) John xxi. 18.(*e*) Psal. xl. 7, 8.

obey his precepts, thou shalt be enabled one day with joy to rise from the grave, and to approach the divine tribunal. Therefore let us praise and adore the Saviour of the world, who, by thus going to temporal death, hath rescued us from death eternal.

2. Nothing can make a Christian more willingly and chearfully take up his Cross, than the consideration that his Lord and Saviour bore the Cross before him.

Who will now refuse to take upon him the Cross, when he sees the Creator of the heavens bending under the weight of his Cross on the earth? When a Person of such a transcendent dignity, whose love to mankind was so great, sets us the example, and calls to us saying, 'Whosoever will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me,' it would be the basest crime to refuse it, if we should be required to bear it for his sake. Whoever seriously considers that the eternal Son of God, who upholds all things by his powerful word, who always dwelt in the regions of bliss, and had dominion over innumerable hosts of adoring Angels, should humble himself so low; should put his shoulders under the ignominious Cross for his sake, that he might be delivered from the curse of God, and crowned with eternal blessings; will be ashamed of his timorousness and ingratitude in avoiding the cross, will humbly implore his Redeemer, and say with courage and resolution, While I live, will I follow thee, and bear thy cross. If therefore we would have comfort in the Cross

of the blessed Jesus, we must necessarily resolve to enter into fellowship with him, both by the inward crucifixion of the flesh, and by outwardly taking upon us the reproach of Christ. Now as the Lord Jesus suffered internally and externally, both in soul and body; so must his followers taste of both kinds of sufferings in some degree, and bring themselves to a willing resignation to bear the Cross. For these are our blessed Saviour's own words: 'Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and follow after me, cannot be my disciple (f).' If we are sometimes exempt from reproach and persecution, we are to shew ourselves the more faithful, by daily crucifying the old man with its affections and lusts, and by submitting to any inward sufferings, which it may please God to lay upon us.

II.

We come now, in the second place, to consider the company which attended the Lord Jesus to Golgotha, or the Place of a Skull. A multitude of people were got together on this occasion, which generally happens even when common malefactors are carried to execution. Curiosity brought many of them; others came out of a malicious desire of entertaining their eyes with the pains and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. Others again were drawn to the place by different views. Nevertheless the love of God, from this attendance of the peo-

(f) Luke xiv. 27.

ple, produced a salutary effect. The consequence of it was this, that they returned home in a quite different temper and disposition of mind, from that with which they had set out. For when they came to see the extraordinary miracles which followed our Saviour's death, St. Luke informs us, that 'All the people who came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned (g).' Thus a blessing attends our attending on the Lord Jesus, and adherence to him; though at first it may not proceed from a heart entirely free from guile.

Besides this mixed multitude of the people, there were in particular two malefactors led in company with the Lord Jesus, in order to be crucified with him. It appears from the accounts of the Evangelists, that these malefactors were murderers and robbers; crucifixion being the punishment of those crimes among the Romans *. These notorious criminals, Pilate, the Roman governor, seems to have reserved for the feast of the Passover; that by executing them before an extraordinary concourse of people, who were at Jerusalem on account of the feast, a greater number might take warning by their example. It is probable that these murderers were of the number of the seditious persons, who at that time swarmed in Judea, and declared against any subjection to the Roman government, under

(g) Luke xxiii 48.

* Hinc SENEGA, Latrocinium fecit aliquis. Quid meruit? ut suspendatur. Epist. VII.

pretence that a Jew was to acknowledge no other sovereign but God ; and possibly they might have been among those, who were taken with Barabbas in an insurrection (*b*). As our blessed Lord was also accused of rebellion and high treason, the Governor ordered that he should be carried to execution with the other revolters, that they who were supposed to be guilty of the same crime might together suffer the same punishment.

The Lord Jesus by descending so low, and thus debasing himself so as to be put on the level with murderers and rebels, intended to atone for our associating

1. With the wicked and profligate. ‘Unto the wicked God sayeth, When thou sawest a thief, thou then consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers (*i*),’ nay, with slanderers, murderers, profane swearers, drunkards, and other scandals to Christianity. Thus by running with these in the same excess of riot (*k*), when we either suffer ourselves to be carried away by other slaves of sin, or when we carry away others, and by our bad example draw them into sin ; we drew on the Son of God this indignity, that he was made a companion of murderers and robbers, and was led along with them to death. May this consideration create in us an abhorrence of all wicked company.

2. Our blessed Lord, by this circumstance of his passion, intended to sanctify the sufferings of his

(*b*) Mark xv. 7.

(*i*) Psal. l. 16, 18.

(*k*) 1 Pet. iv. 4.

followers.

followers. For they are often classed with heretics, rebels, and the worst of criminals; and are looked upon as people who deserve to be condemned to suffer the same punishment.

3. Our blessed Saviour by this intended to give us an intimation, how we ought to lead out our old man to be crucified with him. We have in us two notorious malefactors, who are guilty of all manner of disobedience and rebellion against the Divine Majesty, and transgress all his commands. If we would know them, they are, presumptuous carnal Reason, which refuses to submit itself to divine Revelation, and our perverse Self-will, which spurns at the yoke of Christ. Let us therefore without delay seize these two criminals, bind them, and fasten them to the cross of Christ. If we are desirous of inward peace and tranquillity, we must not spare these rebels from which all our disturbances arise; and, if we would reap true comfort from the crucifixion of Christ, we must chearfully resolve to crucify those corruptions in us, that brought him to the cross.

III.

We come now to consider what happened to the Lord Jesus by the way to his crucifixion. In general, the treatment he met with was very different from that which he had experienced six days before, at his public entrance into Jerusalem. He then entered the city amidst the joyful acclamations and applauding Hosanna's of

the people. Then the popular cry was, 'Blessed ' is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' On the contrary, curses, insults, mockeries, and bitter sarcasms, now pursued the blessed Jesus as he went forth to Golgotha. For when Christ, or his members, are to suffer, every one insults, reviles, and speaks evil of them. Probably, many indignities were offered our blessed Lord by the way, which are passed over in silence by the Evangelists. However, they make mention of two particular incidents, which happened while our Saviour walked to the place of execution; and these are, *First*, That he was eased of the weight of his cross, and *Secondly*, That he was publicly lamented by the compassionate women of Jerusalem.

First, Jesus meets with some ease from the heavy load, with which he was oppressed; the cross, which he dragged along with so much difficulty, being taken from him, and laid on another. The enemies of our blessed Lord little intended, indeed, to shew him any kindness by taking the cross from him: On the contrary, their intention was, 1. to hurry on the faster to Mount Golgotha; for as Jesus, by reason of his weakness and fatigue, moved very slowly, the Jews were out of patience till the sentence of death was finally executed on him. 2. To reserve our blessed Lord for accuter pangs and greater tortures; for they were apprehensive that he might faint by the way, and die under their hands; which would not have been near so satisfactory to them as to see him, nailed to and bleeding on, the

the cross. Therefore perceiving that his strength was exhausted by watchings, hunger, fatigue, and loss of blood, they took the burden from Jesus, that he might not sink under it. But the Heavenly Father so directed this circumstance, as to procure some alleviation to his Son thus harrassed, and sinking under the weight of his miseries.

Our blessed Saviour had himself carried the cross from the Hall of Judgment to the City gate; but when they came without the gate, the soldiers seeing that Jesus was by no means able to drag his cumbersome load up the hill, they looked out for a proper person to carry it to the destined place, with the desired expedition.

By the particular direction of God, there happened to pass by a man called Simon, a native of Cyrene a city of Lybia, which, though it was above a thousand miles distant from Jerusalem, was full of Jews who had also a synagogue there. This man, possibly, might be possessed of some farm without the city, and was coming from it to Jerusalem, in order to perform his devotions in the temple. This Simon was, in all appearance, a secret disciple of the Lord Jesus; and seeing him sink under the load of the cross, and dragging it along with great difficulty, he either by words or gesture expressed some compassion for him. This was a sufficient provocation to the insolent soldiers to lay hold of Simon, and to fasten the cross on his back. Thus he was compelled to

follow the Lord Jesus, and to carry the cross after him, perhaps by way of ridicule, as he was supposed to be one of Christ's disciples. Had he been an unrelenting Jew, and an enemy to Christ and his doctrine, he would have thrown down the cross at their feet. He would have railed against Jesus, and excused himself from performing this ignominious office; nay, the chief Priests would have interceded for him, to have him set at liberty, and intreated the soldiers not to make a laughing stock of one of their fellow-citizens. But as he was probably a disciple of Christ, he patiently submitted to be mocked and ridiculed with his Lord and Saviour. At first, indeed, he was a little discomposed, and thought it a great hardship to be treated so scandalously; but, on perceiving the uncommon patience and mildness of the blessed Jesus, who was hurried on before him by the rude multitude, he learned of Christ to possess his soul in patience, and quietly submitted to let them do what they pleased with him. This Simon of Cyrene here seems, as it were, to supply the place of Simon Peter, who had made a sanguine promise that he would follow his master, and go with him to death (*1*); but, instead of making good his words, had betaken himself to flight along with the other disciples. Therefore the wise providence of God seems to have provided another Simon to bear Christ company, when he was going to suffer death.

(1) John xiii. 37.

The *second* particular incident, which happened while our blessed Saviour walked to the place of execution, was a public testimony of pity and compassion. A great company of women, some of whom were inhabitants of Jerusalem, others had followed Jesus from Galilee, accompanied him bewailing and lamenting him (*m*). Probably, in some of them this was only the effect of a humane, sympathetic feeling, which generally excites a natural compassion to malefactors when they are carried to execution, as they are partakers of one common nature with us. In others this natural tenderness might be mixed with self-love; for they were concerned, that a person who had performed such surprising miracles, who had healed the sick, the lame, and the blind, and was their physician and helper in all their distresses, should be put to such a painful ignominious death. At the same time, this compassion in some few of them, may be supposed to have its rise from purer and more disinterested motives. Be this as it will, it shewed itself outwardly in gestures of passionate grief; for they beat their breasts *, wrung their hands, wept, and lamented.

These expressions of sorrow in the women denoted that they were ignorant of the mystery of the Cross, and had but a weak faith. Had

(*m*) Luke xxiii. 27. 49.

* Id enim indicat verbum *ἐκοπτο* Matth. xi. 17. Luc. viii. 52. quod propriè *percusserunt*, metonymicè vero *planxerunt* significat, quia lugentes pectus ac lumbos percutere, ac pugnis suis tundere solebant. Conf. Luc. xviii. 13. xxiii. 48. Jer. xxxi. 19. uti pluribus docet MART. GEIERUS, de *Luctu Hebræorum*, C. xvi.

they

they known the counsel of God with regard to the sufferings of his Son; had they been convinced, that Jesus went to death not by compulsion, but willingly; and that he should again soon release himself from its tyranny by a glorious resurrection, they would not have been seen to beat their breasts, lament and bewail him. But, in their hearts, he was accounted as one dead; and they concluded that all the hopes of the redemption of Israel were buried in his grave. However, these circumstances were also directed by the wise and sacred counsel of God. These tears of the spectators bore witness to the innocence of the blessed Jesus, which Pilate had before so often acknowledged. These tears publicly accused his iniquitous judges of injustice, and openly condemned the sentence of death which they had pronounced on him. These tears were some of the outward expressions of grief, due to the memory of the King of Israel (*n*). These tears were preludes to the accomplishment of the prophecy of Zechariah (*o*), who declares, that all the women of the tribes of Israel should one day mourn for the Messiah. Lastly, by this incident the beginning and the end of our Saviour's sufferings were made to harmonize with each other. He, at whose birth the mothers of Bethlem (*p*) mourned and wept for their children (which was a type of this lamentation for the death of the Messiah) is now, at his death, mourned and lamented by the

(*n*) 2 Sam. i. 24. 2 Chron. xxxii. 33. xxxv. 25.

(*o*) Chap. xii. 10, 14.

(*p*) Jer. xxxi. 15.

mothers of Jerufalem. From thefe circumftances we fhall deduce the following truths.

I. God is fo gracious, that he never fuffers us to be oppreffed beyond what we are able to bear ; but, when it is moft neceffary, he provides fome relief.

Thus it happened to the bleffed Jefus, in the inftance before us. When his human ftrength was fo exhausted, fo that he was quite unable to bear his crofs, God fo directed contingences, that he was eafed of its oppreffive weight. Thus will it be with every fincere difciple, who with patience and refignation bears the crofs of Chrift. His faithful and compaffionate Saviour, who from his own experience knows, what it is for human nature to be loaded beyond its ftrength fo as to fink under its burden, will have mercy on him ; will prevent him from being oppreffed beyond his ftrength ; will lighten the burden under which he groans, and fupport him with his all-fufftaining hand. If it is enjoined in the Divine Law, that even an afs fhall not lie under the weight of his burden, but that he fhould be helped up (*q*), much more will our bleffed Lord, in his tender love, hold out his hand to thofe who bear his crofs, and fupport thofe who are fainting under it. Of this timely relief all the followers of Chrift may make themfelves fure. Let us therefore chearfully take up that burden, which love will render eafy and light ; befides, the fufferings of the prefent time

(*q*) Exod. xxiii. 5.

are not to be compared to the glory, reserved for him, who holdeth out to the end.

2. God overlooks our natural aversion to sufferings, if we do not wilfully indulge it to excess.

It is not improbable that Simon the Cyrenian at first made some opposition; for they compelled him to bear the Cross of Christ. This is an emblem of the timorous backwardness of human nature in taking up the Cross, and its fondness for ease, conveniency, and worldly esteem. Alas! we daily shew our desire to be excused from bearing the Cross, and thereby confirm the observation of St. Paul (*r*), 'That
'no chastening, for the present, is joyous, but
'grievous to us.' How willing soever the spirit may be, the flesh is generally weak; especially when the Cross comes so unexpectedly, as it did here on Simon. But blessed be God, who has compassion on the infirmities of his children, and for Christ's sake, will forgive them these natural motions of self-love, if they do but earnestly strive against them, and pray to him for more willingness under persecutions and sufferings. Let us therefore not only imitate Simon, in his reluctancy at first to take up the Cross; but let us, after his example, derive strength from the fulness of Christ to overcome that reluctancy. For this man, by seeing the astonishing gentleness of Jesus Christ, who suffered himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, overcame the reluctant motions of nature; and

(*r*) Heb. xii. 11.

after-

afterwards held the reproach of Christ so dear, that by his means his two sons Alexander and Rufus became disciples of Jesus Christ (s).

3. To do or suffer any thing for Christ's sake will perpetuate a man's name among the congregations of the Saints.

Thus by Simon's bearing our Saviour's Cross, his name has been transmitted down to this day ; so that wherever the Gospel of Christ is known, mention is made of him. The same effect has the Cross with regard to all those who, bear it in the fellowship of Christ, with patience, resignation, and joy. How honourable is it to the memory of a deceased Christian, when one can glory, with truth, that he bore the yoke of Christ, and though dead, yet still liveth. This is the blessed and glorious path to true fame, and immortal reputation in the congregation of the Saints ; whereas all the other false encomiums, and renowned titles, with which the world emblazons the memory of those who have signalized themselves in its service, at length go out in smoke and stench.

IV.

In the last place, we are to consider what our blessed Saviour said as he was led to his crucifixion. Far from being struck dumb with terror and dejection, he performed this painful ignominious walk with a composed presence of mind. Undoubtedly he conversed more in silence with his

(s) Rom. xvi. 13.

heavenly Father, than with men: However, he opened his mouth, and made known the thoughts of his heart to the latter in very remarkable words, which are recorded by St. Luke. No murmurings against his Father's decree escaped his lips, nor any imprecations, menaces, or invectives against his enemies; but if he opened his mouth on this occasion, it was to preach repentance. The Cross being taken from our blessed Lord, and laid on Simon's shoulders, he made use of this interval of ease for speaking to the women that followed lamenting and bewailing him, and in their persons to the whole Jewish nation, such things as belonged to their peace. Those remarkable words of the blessed Jesus and the meaning of them, will be the subject of the following Consideration.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Faithful Saviour, praised be thy name, who didst suffer thyself to be led away to death, that we might have entrance into life. We bless thee for sanctifying, in the person of Simon, the bearing of the Cross after thee, and taking away the reproach and curse from our Cross in bearing it thyself. Make us, we beseech thee, ready and willing to follow thee our Leader, whithersoever thou goest. Teach us to set a proper value on the fellowship of thy sufferings, and, in love to bear the burdens of others, that we may fulfil the law of Christ. Grant
this

this for thy name sake, and bless for our edification those circumstances of thy meritorious passion, which we have now considered. Amen.

CONSIDERATION II.

*The last penitential sermon of the LORD JESUS ;
as it was explained in a discourse, preached
on a day of public humiliation in the year
1725.*

May the blessed Jesus, who himself preached repentance, and ordered that repentance should be preached in his name ; for the sake of his infinite love, bless the consideration of this his last penitential sermon to all our hearts ! Amen.

Dearly beloved in the Lord !

PENITENTIAL Sermons have ever been in use from the beginning of the world. The first discourse of this kind was preached by God himself in Paradise, when he represented to our first Parents, after the Fall, their sin and transgression : when he recommended to them a constant enmity against Satan and his works, and, at the same time, a lively faith in the promised Seed of the woman (a). After this, God was pleased to expostulate with Cain, when he pined with envy and hatred against his brother Abel, in the following words which are a kind of penitential sermon : ‘ Why art thou wroth ?

(a) Gen. iii. 9—19.

‘ and

‘ and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou
 ‘ doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if
 ‘ thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door (b).’
 What was thus begun by God himself, the great
 pattern of perfection, his faithful servants have
 continued in all succeeding ages. The devout
 Patriarchs who lived before the deluge, and
 particularly Enos, Enoch, and Noah, were
 preachers of repentance and righteousness; setting
 forth to the inhabitants of the antediluvian world
 their heinous sins, and making known the Di-
 vine judgments which should come upon them.

After the deluge, which, more than any peni-
 tential Sermon, manifested the wrath of God
 from heaven against all the wicked ways of
 men, God began to preach repentance to those
 who survived, in which he represents that all
 the thoughts and imaginations of man’s heart
 are evil from his youth; however, for the sake of
 another person, who was to bear and expiate the
 sin and curse, he was at the same time pleased
 graciously to promise, no more to curse the earth,
 nor to destroy it by a new deluge (c). Since
 that remarkable æra, God has from time to
 time raised up other faithful witnesses, to preach
 unto men the necessity of repentance and con-
 version to the living God, and of faith in the
 promised Messiah. This was the purport of the
 discourses of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when, at
 the altars which they had set up in several places,
 ‘ they called upon the name of the Lord (d).’

(b) Gen. iv. 6, 7.

(c) Gen. viii. 21.

(d) Gen. xii. 8.

This was the employment of Moses, Samuel, and all the other Prophets. This was the office of John the Baptist and all the Apostles, whom we find continually preaching repentance, and forgiveness of sins (e).

But among all the penitential sermons inserted in the holy Scriptures, none deserve greater attention than those of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, at the commencement and conclusion of his ministerial office, both on the account of the dignity of the Speaker, and the importance of the subject. And as we now propose to consider the last penitential sermon delivered by the great Author of our religion; in the days of his humiliation; let us collect our thoughts, lift up our hearts to God, and pray unto him, that he will be pleased to bless this Consideration to the edification and salvation of our souls.

The T E X T.

Luke xxiii. 27—31.

‘ AND there followed him a great com-
 ‘ pany of people, and of women who
 ‘ also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus
 ‘ turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jeru-
 ‘ salem, weep not for me, but weep for your-
 ‘ selves, and for your children. For, behold,
 ‘ the days are coming, in the which they shall
 ‘ say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs

(e) Luke xxiv. 47. Acts xx. 21.

VOL. III.

D

‘ that

‘ that never bare, and the paps that never gave
 ‘ suck. Then shall they begin to say to the
 ‘ mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover
 ‘ us! For if they do these things in a green
 ‘ tree, what shall be done in the dry?’

These words are the last penitential sermon of the Lord Jesus; in which we shall consider,

First, The true sense and meaning of the words.

Secondly, The use and application of them.

I.

This last penitential sermon of the Son of God was directed to the daughters of Jerusalem, *i. e.* the women who lived at Jerusalem, or those who, with respect to the Jewish worship, acknowledged it as the holy city, and the mother of them all. These women, amidst a prodigious multitude of people, now accompanied our blessed Lord to his crucifixion: For the Evangelist observes, that a great multitude of people followed the blessed Jesus when he was led forth to Mount Golgotha; and among these probably were many foreign Jews and proselytes, who were at that time assembled from all parts of the world at Jerusalem, on account of the Passover. The Lord Jesus in this instance also submitted to be led to death like any common criminal; it being customary for the people to flock together, when a malefactor is to be carried to his execution. But on such occasions, how few of the spectators reflect, that they have within them the seeds of that depravity which, in these unhappy objects, broke out into such enormous crimes; or humbly
 praise

praise God who has preserved them from such sins ; or offer up a compassionate prayer for the criminals? Most of them are usually drawn thither, merely to gratify an idle curiosity ; and much the greater part of the multitude, which followed Christ to Golgotha, cannot be supposed to have had any better motive.

But among this concourse of people were also many women, some of whom had followed Jesus from Galilee, and others lived at Jerusalem. The Evangelist observes, that these women bewailed and lamented Jesus as he went along. These words in the original * signify, that they not only shed tears, but expressed their grief by loud lamentations, and passionate gestures.

In most of these women, this mourning and bewailing possibly proceeded only from a mere natural compassion. They were grieved that a great Prophet, and so good a Man, who had never done the least injury to any one, but, on the contrary, went about doing good, and healing all kinds of diseases, should suffer such an ignominious and painful death. Their concern was increased by the dismal sight of this mournful spectacle, which might have raised compassion not only in the humane, but even in the hardest heart. They saw in our blessed Saviour's face the bloody marks of the cruel indignities he had suffered in Pilate's judgment-hall ; that sacred head having been deplorably abused by the blows of the inhuman soldiers, and by the

* ἐκπνέοντες καὶ ἰδεντοῦν. See p. 25.

wreath of thorns which had been forced into his temples. They likewise now beheld with their own eyes the barbarity of the Roman soldiers, which still raged against our blessed Saviour. Now it was customary among the Romans to torment those who were to be crucified, as they went to the place of execution, by pushing them to and fro, beating them with their fists and clubs, and sometimes strewing sharp stones and nails under their naked feet, and with all possible violence forcing them to walk over them*. As this was the usual way of treating those criminals, who were to suffer death on the cross, it is hardly to be supposed that the soldiers, who hitherto had used the sacred person of Christ with the most cruel insolence, would in the least abate of their rigour on this occasion. Besides all this, the heavy burden of the cross must have been very painful to our blessed Saviour, who was spent with fatigue, and had his shoulders and back all over lacerated by the scourges. So moving a sight might well raise in these women a sensible compassion, which vented itself in tears, lamentations, wringing of the hands, beating the breast, and other outward signs of grief†.

Now it was this compassionate concern that gave occasion to this penitential Sermon; for our blessed Saviour, turning about to these women, as he had the night before to Peter after his fall, with looks full of pity and compassion, addressed them thus: ‘ Weep not for me, ye

* Vide JUSTI LIPSI Diff. de cruce, Lib. II. C. 6.

† See note p. 25.

‘ daughters

‘ daughters of Jerusalem, but weep for yourselves, and for your children, &c.’ Thus our blessed Lord, indeed, directs these words to the women ; but at the same time, in their person, to the whole house of Israel, as the rest of the multitude were within hearing. To this end, he exalted his voice, and spoke with a particular emphasis, as the prophets usually did in their denunciations of God’s approaching judgments.

These words of our Saviour contain the following particulars.

1. An admonition to these women concerning their lamentations.

2. A denunciation of the approaching Divine Judgments.

3. An information of the true cause of those judgments.

1. In the admonition to the women concerning their lamentations, our blessed Saviour forbids them to shed their tears for him, and recommends to them, to weep for themselves, and for their children. The prohibition is expressed in these words : ‘ Weep not for me !’ Not that he absolutely blames their tears, which were rather to be esteemed a public testimony of his innocence ; and deserved the more regard, since by the Jewish Laws, persons condemned to death by the Sanhedrim, were not to be publicly lamented *. But such was the grief of these women, that they were not afraid, by their tears, to condemn the capital sentence passed by the chief Priests and Scribes, as a most unjust pro-

* Vide LIGHTFOOTI Hor. Hebr. in Evang. *Matth.* xxvii. 31.

ceeding. However, we do not read that they were punished by the great council, or insulted by the populace, on this account; which would certainly have been the case, had not these feeble witnesses of our Saviour's innocence been protected by a Superior Power.

But why should our blessed Lord forbid these women to weep for him? It was, *first*, because he perceived that these tears sprung from a wrong source. These compassionate daughters of Jerusalem only looked on Christ's outward wounds, pains, and ignominy, which excited in them a natural sympathetic feeling; but they had no idea of the secret counsel of God, and the true cause of all the sufferings that Jesus endured. They were not sensible that the sins of the world, and consequently their own sins, were to be laid on the head of this sacred Victim; that he was dragging them up to the place of execution; and that he was to offer them in his body on the Cross, and thus publicly make an effectual atonement for, and do them away. *Secondly*, He forbids this weeping, because he looks upon himself in his present circumstances as one that did not deserve any compassion. God himself, as it were, hid his face from his only Son, who was then our Mediator, and loaded with the sins of the whole world. As a dejected sinner, whose conscience is awakened, accounts himself unworthy of every consolation, and of all the affections shewn to him by others; so likewise our Redeemer, being, by the imputation of the sins of the world, made a curse and
expiatory

expiatory sacrifice, accounts himself unworthy to receive any alleviation of his grief from the compassion of others. *Thirdly*, He forbids them to lament, because he knew that his short transitory sufferings would produce such noble fruits, and conduce to the glory of God, and the eternal salvation of mankind; so that there was much greater reason for joy than sorrow on this occasion.

On the other hand, the blessed Jesus advises them to weep for themselves, and for their children. In this exhortation, he alludes to these words, which the people had uttered with great vehemence, a little before, at the instigation of the chief Priests and Elders: ‘ His blood be ‘ upon us, and on our children (*f*)!’ Weep for yourselves! As if our blessed Lord had said, If you are for lamenting and shedding tears, weep for YOURSELVES, not only for your sins, which are the cause of my pains, &c. but likewise for the dreadful calamities, which some of you shall live to see; for many afflictions and trials are coming on you, and it behoves you betimes to arm yourselves against them with prayers and tears. Weep for your CHILDREN, since on them the judgments of obduracy and unbelief shall come; for they shall live to see the days of the unparalleled miseries of the Jewish people during the siege of Jerusalem, and shall perish in them. Alas! did you but know what dreadful judgments of God, both spiritual and temporal, are now hovering over

(*f*) Matth. xxvii. 25.

the heads of your children, and with what rigour the Divine vengeance will require my blood at your hands, you would certainly spare those tears which you now shed for me, to deplore the wretchedness of your unhappy descendants; for in denouncing their calamities, a few days ago, I myself could not refrain from weeping (g). Upon this follows

2. A denunciation of the approaching Divine judgments, which should have been the motives for the Daughters of Jerusalem, to weep for themselves and for their children: ' For behold the
' days are coming, in the which they shall say,
' Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that
' never bare, and the paps that never gave
' suck. Then shall they begin to say to the
' mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills,
' Cover us!'

In these words, our dying Saviour foretels the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter devastation of Judea, by the Romans; which he had before predicted at different times, and upon several occasions. ' Behold, saith our blessed
' Lord, your house is left unto you desolate (h).
' For the day shall come upon thee, that thine
' enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and
' compass thee round, and keep thee in on
' every side; and shall lay thee even with the
' ground, and thy children within thee; And
' they shall not leave in thee one stone upon
' another (i). O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou

(g) Luke xix. 41. and seq.

(i) Luke xix. 43, 44.

(h) Luke xiii. 35.

‘ that killest the Prophets, and stonest them
 ‘ who are sent unto thee! how often would I
 ‘ have gathered thy children together, even as a
 ‘ hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,
 ‘ and ye would not? Behold, your house is left
 ‘ unto you desolate (*k*). And Jesus went out,
 ‘ and departed from the Temple; and the dis-
 ‘ ciples came to him for to shew him the build-
 ‘ ings of the Temple. And Jesus said unto
 ‘ them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I
 ‘ say unto you, There shall not be left here one
 ‘ stone upon another, which shall not be thrown
 ‘ down (*l*).’ And now, a few hours before his
 death, Jesus denounces these woes for the last
 time. In order to set before the Jews the great-
 ness of the misery, which should come on their
 children, in a clearer and more emphatical man-
 ner, he makes use of two figurative expressions,
 borrowed from the writings of the Prophets.

In the first place, our blessed Saviour says,
 ‘ Behold, the days are coming, in the which
 ‘ they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the
 ‘ wombs that never bare, and the paps which
 ‘ never gave suck.’ Now the barrenness of wo-
 men was accounted by the Jews a part of the
 Divine curse, and consequently an extreme dis-
 grace. Hence Rachel in the old Testament, and
 Elizabeth in the New (*m*), when they grew preg-
 nant, praised God for having taken away their
 reproach. On the other hand, fecundity was
 looked upon as a singular honour, and a mark of

(*k*) Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. (*l*) Matth. xxiv. 1, 2.

(*m*) Gen. xxx. 23. Luke i. 25.

the Divine favour. When Christ therefore here declares that the time was coming, when barren women would be accounted much happier than those who had borne and suckled many children, he gives the Jews to understand, that a terrible day of vengeance was approaching; which would be more especially so to fathers and mothers of families, whose personal calamities would be doubled by the misery of their children. Here our blessed Lord alludes to the following passage of the Prophet Hosea, who, when he had a view in the spirit of the misery of the ten Tribes under the Assyrian captivity, cries out, 'Give them, O Lord, a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts (*n*), *i. e.* rather give them no offspring, than suffer them to live to be a cause of so much sorrow to their parents. Hence our blessed Saviour, before, denounced this woe to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Woe unto them that are with child, and unto them that give suck in those days(*o*);' namely, when flight will be the only means of safety, and such persons will be less fit for it than others. Those unhappy women would therefore feel all the woes and calamities of the siege of Jerusalem; and that in a double portion, on account of their beloved offspring.

This prediction was abundantly verified by the melancholy event. For in less than forty years after this woe was denounced, this day of vengeance came attended with all its terrors on

(*n*) Hosea ix. 14.

(*o*) Matth. xxiv. 19.

the Jewish people*. Among other miseries, which the inhabitants of Jerusalem suffered during the siege, they were oppressed with such an intolerable famine, that some of the most tender mothers ate their own children. Other unhappy mothers saw their offspring making the most deplorable lamentations, pining away for hunger, dying of the pestilence, stabbed, cut to pieces, or dashed against the stones by the Roman soldiers before their eyes. Thus the circumstances of the childless being in several respects more tolerable, than of those who had a numerous offspring; How many mothers must have passionately wished, that they had never borne or suckled children!

In the next place, our blessed Lord adds, 'Then will they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us!' Christ here alludes to another passage of the Prophet Hosea, who gives a pathetic representation of the wretchedness of the ten Tribes in the Assyrian captivity, in these words, 'And they shall say 'to the mountains, Cover us! and to the hills, 'Fall on us (*p*)!' Thus the Prophet Isaiah, in his description of the deplorable siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, says, 'And they shall go 'into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves 'of the earth, for the fear of the Lord, and for 'the glory of his Majesty (*q*).' In these words borrowed from the prophetic writings, the Lord Jesus here foretels the calamities which Jeru-

* See Vol. II. p. 370.

(*p*) Hosea x. 8.

(*q*) Isaiah ii. 29.

Jerusalem should endure, when besieged by the Romans; and thereby gives the Jews to understand, that their misery and affliction would be so great when the Romans should invest their city, that many families of distinction leaving their splendid houses, would betake themselves with their wives and children to the most lonely caves of the mountains, in order to avoid the cruelty of the Roman army; that hunger and cold would render those subterraneous retreats so insupportable to them, that they should ardently long for death; and, in their misery and despair, wish the mountains would fall on them, and be their grave.

This prophecy likewise, whether the words be taken in a literal or figurative sense, was fully accomplished. For Josephus informs us, that on the approach of the Roman army, the Jews fled in crowds to the mountains and hills, and wandered about or concealed themselves in caves, where, in all probability, most of them must have perished with hunger, while the rest, being weary of such a miserable life, a thousand times ardently wished for death. But those who survived the destruction of Jerusalem were dispersed into all countries, and obliged to seek refuge among other nations, and to request of them that they might be, as it were, covered by them; being persecuted every where by the wrath of God and of the Lamb. These heavy judgments the Son of God here publicly denounces, that the whole Jewish nation might be awakened

awakened to repentance, be roused from their lethargic security, and be moved by a true conversion to God, to avert his heavy wrath which otherwise must be the necessary consequence of their enormous transgressions. For this end,

3. He acquaints them with the true cause of such terrible judgments, by drawing the following inference: 'For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' Our blessed Lord in these words, which are taken from the prophet Ezekiel (r), compares himself to a green, *i. e.* sappy and fruitful tree. Thus he is likewise called in the Revelation of St. John, 'The Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (s).' On the other hand, he compares the impenitent Jews to dry and unfruitful trees, without any sap of the spiritual life, who, consequently, could bring forth no fruit of repentance and grace.

Hence it appears, that the primary cause of their approaching calamity was of a twofold nature. First, they rejected, and crucified the Messiah, to which our Saviour alludes in these words, 'If they do these things in a green tree;' if they thus deal with me, who am entirely innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge. This was indeed the capital sin of the Jewish nation. They had already embrued their hands in the blood of many of the Prophets. But now they filled up the measure of their iniquities, by putting to death the Son of God himself. For by their repeated

(r) Chap. xx. 47. xxii. 3.

(s) Chap. ii. 7.

clamours

clamours, they insisted in their savage fury, that he should be crucified; and when the Pagan judge himself bore witness that he was an innocent and a just person, they rather chose that the Divine vengeance should pursue their latest posterity, than that he should be suffered to live.

The second cause of their calamities was their obstinate impenitence; for they wantonly abused the patience and long-suffering of God, and, notwithstanding all the labours of John the Baptist, of Christ himself, and his apostles, continued the same dead and unfruitful trees as they were before. Therefore, they could expect nothing else at last, but the execution of that sentence, which Christ had long since denounced against them in a parable, viz. 'Cut down [the 'barren fig-tree] why cumbereth it the ground (t)?' John the Baptist had before, in God's name, declared to the Jews the same truth, in these words, 'And now also the ax is laid to the root of the 'trees: Therefore every tree that bringeth not 'forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into 'the fire.'

Moreover the blessed Jesus by these words, as it were, called upon the Jewish people to look on his sufferings as in a mirror, which represented to them the wrath that should come on their city and nation. As if our blessed Lord had said, A green tree has a kind of power in itself, by which it resists the fire; whereas a dry tree is soon consumed by the flames, without

(t) Luke xiii. 7.

(u) Matth. iii. 10.

making any opposition. Thus if I, who am by nature a green and fruitful tree, am dried up by the fire of God's displeasure, on account of the sins of others which are imputed to me; if I am loaded with a curse, and as it were rooted out from the land of the living, in a most painful manner; much more will the unbelieving Jews, who are dead and barren trees, without any sap or life of the Spirit, and even thorny briars and sons of Belial, be seized by the Divine wrath, and consumed by temporal and eternal judgments on account of their own sins, if they persevere in their impenitence.

Now these words are still more remarkable on the following account. The Jews, by their repeated clamours, had prevailed on the Roman governor to crucify Christ the Green Tree, and hang him as a curse on a dry tree; but our Saviour intimates, that the time would come, when the Jews, who were dry trees, should be hanged on green trees. For when the Jews, who were besieged in Jerusalem by the Romans, were unable to hold out any longer against the miseries which raged within the city, they went out of Jerusalem in multitudes to surrender themselves prisoners. Now the number of such deserters being very great, Titus the Roman General ordered them to be executed in a most dreadful manner. For above five hundred of them, after they had been tortured and scourged, were crucified for several days successively before the city walls, in all manner of frightful postures. According to Josephus,

sephus, such vast numbers of Jews perished in this manner, that at length there was neither room to erect the crosses near the walls, nor a sufficient number of crosses for the condemned *. Thus the Divine retaliation manifested itself; for God permitted these dry barren trees to suffer the same barbarous treatment, which the Green Tree had met with from them.

II.

Having thus illustrated the true sense and meaning of these words of the Lord Jesus, let us, in the next place, turn our thoughts to a salutary application of them, and consider the advantages which both impenitent and penitent souls may derive from them.

Among the impenitent we may reckon those who impiously despise the covenant of grace, and live in a total neglect of God's ordinances, and, particularly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; those who live in the open violation of the divine laws, and commit all the works of darkness; those who are given to lasciviousness, gluttony, and drunkenness; and those who live in enmity, and bear an irreconcilable hatred to their neighbours. Concerning these and the like scandals of the Christian name, who, alas, are too numerous, the Spirit of God has declared by St. Paul (x), That while

* These were not deserters, but were taken prisoners by the ambuscade placed round the city, as they went out in the night for provision: For *Titus* gave orders, that only such as sallied out, or made resistance, should be put death. See *Josephus*, B. V. chap. 11.

(x) Gal. v. 19.

they continue in such a state, they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Moreover, to this unhappy class likewise belong all those who have not, with their whole hearts, conceived such a hatred against every sin, that they would rather suffer death, than commit any deliberate offence. But much more justly may they be numbered among the impenitent, who are enamoured with sin, and either walk, like brute beasts, according to the instigations of their wicked lusts; or, instead of the Word of God, regulate their lives by the pattern of the polite world, as it is called; and imitate the ill example set them in all the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, whatever their religious sentiments may be; whether they are utterly ignorant of the truths of religion, or have a knowledge of them attended with conviction. Oh that every one, at this description, would ask himself, 'Lord 'is it I?' And if his conscience should accuse him, may he be the more ardently desirous of learning, how he shall benefit himself by this last penitential sermon of our blessed Lord.

In the first place, examine thyself, whether thou hast placed the whole of thy religion in railing against Judas, the chief Priests, and their officers, against Pilate and his soldiers, and in execrating their impiety; and, on the other hand, in expressing a natural compassion for Christ, as an innocent and just man, &c. Many there are who, from such natural emotions, conclude themselves to be good Christians, and that their

hearts are well disposed towards their Saviour ; whereas they never gave any real proofs of their love towards him or his members. But notwithstanding all these symptoms, they are only hypocrites, and often enemies to the Cross of Christ. Beware therefore, that thou do not account these as infallible marks of thy state of grace ; for as mere nature, especially in persons of a delicate constitution and tender disposition, often produces such effects, to be accounted a true disciple of Jesus Christ, thou must do something more.

Rather be awakened by these words of Christ : ' Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves ! ' Turn thine eyes on thyself, and, in humble prayer to God, request the assistance of the Divine Light, in order to search the inmost recesses of thy heart. And be assured, that if thou dost not flatter, nor wilfully deceive thyself, thou wilt have great cause to weep for thyself, and thy numberless sins. If God is pleased to grant thee a thorough insight into thy deep guilt, thou wilt not be able to look on thyself otherwise than as a dry, sapless, dead, and barren tree, without the least fruit of the Spirit which may be pleasing to God, and beneficial to thy neighbour ; or, at most, with only a few leaves of an external profession of the truth, and observance of the outward worship, as a covering to thy reproach and nakedness. If, under the conviction of thy natural sterility and indisposition for any thing that is good, thou wilt lift up thine eyes, and examine the dire threatenings of the law, and there find how the Divine Justice threatens all dry and bar-

ren trees with the last fatal stroke ; the voice, which says Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ? will throw thy conscience into the utmost consternation.

This terror will also be greatly increased by reflecting, how the justice of God hath, on account of imputed sin, proceeded with Jesus Christ, the Green Tree of Life. Behold, God has not spared his own Son, but punished in him, with the greatest severity, the sins of the world, which he had consented should be imputed to him ; and caused him to discharge to the utmost farthing those debts, for which he had become a security. No favour was shewn him, though he was the Son of God. For as he had taken on himself the whole burden of sin ; so was he likewise obliged to bear the whole weight of God's displeasure. Alas ! how did he totter under the enormous load ! How did he tremble and despond when he was to drink the cup, which was full of bitter sufferings ! How, instead of sweat, did the sanguine streams issue from his sacred body, and run down to the ground ! How was he reviled, insulted, abused, mocked, and spurned, as if he had been the most impious wretch, by the merciless hands of men ! The meanest servant was allowed to treat him with contempt. At length, after he had tasted the bitterness of the most painful sufferings, he was lifted up (as a curse) betwixt heaven and earth, and gave up the ghost in the greatest disgrace and ignominy. When thou dost seriously consider, O man, how thy sins have brought

all those sufferings on him, thy awakened and terrified conscience will soon teach thee to make this inference, 'If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' Thou wilt resemble a malefactor standing before his judge, to hear the sentence of death pronounced against him. Thou wilt feel something of that anguish of mind, which Christ describes in these words: 'Then will they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us!' Thou wilt be ready, for shame and dread of the offended Deity, to hide thyself, if it were possible, from his presence, in dens and caves of the earth; being convinced that a wretch, who has crucified the Son of God, is not worthy to walk on the earth, or behold the light of the sun. This is indeed the legal use of Christ's sufferings, when, as a mirror of sin and wrath, they terrify the conscience, and occasion an unspeakable anguish of mind. But, according to our present situation, we must begin with this method of considering them. Man naturally enjoys himself in full security, though he is the object of God's displeasure. He says, I have peace; I am in no danger, even when Divine Vengeance watches him like a lion. But God has in Scripture shewn many severe examples of his wrath against impenitent sinners. The first world was drowned by the waters of the deluge. On Sodom and Gomorrah he rained down fire from heaven. Corah's impious adherents were swallowed up alive by the earth. Lastly, Jerusalem, which he permitted to be rased to the
very

very ground, proclaims the Divne Justice, and teaches us that the Lord is greatly to be feared. The heavy judgments which God poured on the Jews, should be a particular admonition, calling out to us, ' Behold the severity of the Lord to those who are fallen !' If God has not spared the natural branches, what assurance have we that he will spare us (y) ? But never has God so awfully manifested his great anger against sin, as in the sufferings of his beloved Son ; therefore, O sinner, thy conscience must first be awakened, and filled with terror and anxiety at this affecting consideration. " This terror, says the pious Luther, must arise from the consideration of the severe displeasure of God against sin, and his rigour in punishing sinners ; since he would not acquit his own beloved Son, to whom the sins of the world were imputed, without such a severe expiation. What will be done to actual sinners, if the beloved Child is thus chastised ? Inexpressible must be that guilt, which requires a person of such transcendent dignity for a satisfaction." Happy is he, who, from the sufferings of Christ, is filled with a salutary dread ! Happy is he, who is induced thereby to weep for his sins, and to apply to God for grace and forgiveness. Such a one will have no occasion, in the day of wrath, to call on the mountains and rocks to fall on him, and hide him from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb (z).

(y) Rom. xi. 21, 22.

(z) Revel. vi. 15, 16, 17.

Now he that is thus awakened from his carnal security, and has a settled fear of the wrath of God, ought further to know the advantage, which a penitent soul may derive from this penitential sermon of our blessed Lord.

A penitent person is one, who from his heart is terrified at his own depravity, and the heavy wrath of God which he has deserved by his sins; who acknowledges himself a dry and unfruitful tree, fit only for the fire; who inwardly abhors and detests all sin, which caused the green Tree of life to be so ignominiously and barbarously treated; who now makes it his ultimate wish that the sentence of God to cut it down may be reversed, and that, by the vital juice of the true Vine, he may be made a vegetating, fruitful, and flourishing tree.

If this, O man, be the state of thy mind, then deeply lay to heart this thy Saviour's last penitential sermon. Turn unto him, and represent to thyself thy merciful Redeemer turning to thee, and, with a look of the tenderest affection, addressing himself to thee in these or the like words: " Weep not for me, thou poor
 " compassionate sinner; for so glorious will be
 " the consequences of my bitter sufferings, that
 " thou hast greater cause thankfully to praise
 " God for them. I have discharged the debt
 " of thy sins; I have abolished the curse denounced against them; I have inclined the
 " heart of God to look upon thee with affectionate love; finally, I have obtained eternal
 " life and salvation for thee. The severe punishment

“ nishment which thou didst deserve I have
“ borne, that thou mayest have peace, and be
“ healed by my wounds. Therefore weep not
“ for me! For thyself, indeed, mayest thou
“ well weep; since thou hast brought innu-
“ merable pains and indignities on me, by thy
“ sins. But all this I forgive thee from the
“ bottom of my heart. It was of my own good
“ will, that I freely took upon me thy sins, and
“ the punishment that was due to them. I am
“ the Lamb of God that taketh away thy sins,
“ and I am the Messenger of the Covenant
“ that bringeth thee pardon and grace from my
“ heavenly Father. My blood does not cry for
“ vengeance like that of Abel: On the con-
“ trary, it continually intercedes for reconcilia-
“ tion between God and man. It does not
“ rend the heavens with a noise of thunder; but
“ rather restrains the instruments of the Divine
“ vengeance, and restores peace, friendship, and
“ tranquillity. Therefore wipe thy over-flow-
“ ing eyes; thou hast wept enough for thyself.
“ I have counted thy tears, and put them into
“ my bottle. Thy mother has no cause to wish
“ that she had never bore thee; For by my
“ merit I have removed the sentence of con-
“ demnation denounced against thee at thy
“ birth, and by my painful death, I have re-
“ newed thee to an eternal life. Art thou for
“ seeking safety among the rocks? I will hide
“ thee from the wrath of God, and by my me-
“ diation thou shalt be in perfect security. Art
“ thou afraid of being hewn down as a dry
E 4 “ and

“ and barren tree, and therefore dreatest the
 “ ax of God’s wrath? know that I have suffered
 “ its stroke in thy stead. I have permitted
 “ myself to be rooted out of the land of the
 “ living, that thou mightest be spared. My
 “ merit shall protect thy penitent soul against it,
 “ and my Spirit, which I shall pour upon thee,
 “ shall make thee green and flourishing; so
 “ that thou shalt be like a tree planted by the
 “ rivers of water, that bringeth its fruit in its
 “ season. The name of my Father shall be
 “ glorified in thy wonderful fertility, and, after
 “ standing thy due time in the garden of my
 “ church on earth, I will transplant thee to my
 “ heavenly Paradise, and place thee by the crystal
 “ stream which issues from my throne: There
 “ shalt thou flourish in everlasting bloom and
 “ verdure, and thy leaf shall never fade.”

THE PRAYER.

NOW, O faithful Saviour, thanks be to thee
 for this thy last penitential sermon, and
 for thy grace which thou hast now given us
 in the consideration of it. Impress it deeply on
 our hearts by thy Holy Spirit; and grant that
 when we reflect on thy sufferings, we may
 say, If this be done in a green tree, what shall
 be done in a dry? May all sleeping consciences
 be roused by this consideration, and be filled
 with the salutary dread of the wrath of God,
 that they may be awakened to a sincere repen-
 tance. Spare, we beseech thee, those barren
 trees

trees which thou still findest among us, and by thy vital power make them fruitful in good works. As for those whom thou hast already fertilized, give them to abound more and more in the fruits of faith and love, that the name of thy Father may be glorified in them. Amen.

CONSIDERATION III.

The crucifixion of the LORD JESUS.

‘ (a) **A**ND they bring him unto a place,
‘ called in the Hebrew Golgotha,
‘ which is, being interpreted, the Place of a
‘ Skull. And they gave him to drink vinegar
‘ [or sour wine] mingled with myrrhe and gall:
‘ And when he had tasted thereof, he would
‘ not drink; and he received it not. And they
‘ crucified him there, and two other malefac-
‘ tors with him; one on the right hand, and
‘ the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst.
‘ And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith,
‘ And he was numbered with the transgressors.
‘ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for
‘ they know not what they do.

In these words we have an account of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus; concerning which the following particulars are here mentioned.

First, The place where it was performed.

Secondly, The preparation for it.

(a) Matth. xxvii. 33, 34, 38. Mark xv. 22, 23, 27, 28.
Luke xxiii. 33, 34. John xix. 17, 18.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The crucifixion itself.

Fourthly, Christ's intercession for his enemies during his crucifixion.

I.

First, As to the place where Jesus was crucified, we are told in general, that it was on Mount Golgotha; and we are further particularly informed, that he was crucified in the middle between two malefactors.

Mount Golgotha, or the Place of a Skull, derived that name either from the roundness of its summit which resembled a human skull, or from the skulls of those who had been beheaded there; for, according to all appearance, Pilate had made this hill the theatre of several executions. Possibly it was the usual place where criminals were beheaded, or put to death some other way. Places appropriated for the execution of malefactors, among the ancients, were generally on eminences; that the greater number of spectators might be able to see the execution, and be deterred from committing the like crimes. How must the spotless soul of the Son of God been affected, as he ascended this mountain, which was covered with crowds of spectators rejoicing at his ignominious death! What a contrast was there between this ascent to Golgotha, and his former descent on mount Sinai, when he was attended by hosts of adoring Angels, and displayed his glory to the whole people of Israel.

But

But the place, where our blessed Lord was crucified, is more particularly specified by all the four Evangelists, who observe that two malefactors were crucified with him, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, and Jesus in the midst. Probably, the Jewish Rulers had persuaded the Roman soldiers to crucify Jesus in the midst between the two malefactors. By this, their design was to bring the greater contempt on our blessed Saviour, and to make the people imagine, that he was not only guilty of the same crimes with those malefactors, but was their Chief, and the ringleader of all those rebels and seditious banditti, with which the whole land of Judea was over-run at that time.

Let us admire the wisdom of God in the choice of this place for the crucifixion of Christ, and observe what doctrines may be deduced from this circumstance of our Saviour's passion.

First, We may observe that the place of Christ's crucifixion was not fortuitously chosen, according to the pleasure of his enemies; but was particularly appointed before by the Divine Wisdom.

1. It was a place without the walls of Jerusalem. This happened not only because it was the custom of the Romans and Jews, to execute all capital sentences without the city, and the latter even in the wilderness led blasphemers and sabbath-breakers out of the camp and stoned them (*b*); but because it was fixed

(*b*) Lev. xxiv. 14. Numb. xv. 35, 36.

by the secret decree of the Divine Wisdom. Jerusalem was then accounted the metropolis of the people of God, where the Deity in a peculiar manner resided. Now Jesus was led out of the city to the place of malefactors, to shew that he was excluded from the presence of God, and the fellowship of his people; and ranked with those, who from the cross descended into hell. Thus Christ was to bear our curse, and, by his being cast out of the earthly Jerusalem, was to make us free denizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Besides, it did not seem congruous, that the great Sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world should be offered up within the walls of the Jewish metropolis, like a Levitical offering. An open place, which was not confined within any walls, better suited an universal sacrifice.

2. It was an unclean place, polluted with the blood of malefactors; a place, where death, as it were, had set up his standard. Here the Prince of life was to attack and overcome death in his own camp and dominion, and to swallow him up in victory.

3. This Mount Golgotha was a part of mount Moriah, on which Isaac, that glorious type of Christ, was to have been sacrificed, and where Abraham received a singular demonstration of the Divine favour. In this very place the great Antitype, the true Isaac, the seed of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, was to be slain; and by this circumstance, an
illus-

illustrious pledge of God's watchful care over his people was given to the whole Church.

4. It was a high place; and by this was fulfilled our blessed Lord's prediction, that the Son of Man should be lifted up (c). As Moses and Aaron both died on a high mountain; so here, the true High Priest of the New Covenant, and the supreme Lawgiver, was to dye on an eminence. By this he likewise intimates, that by his Gospel he was set up as an ensign to all nations, and that the Gentiles should enquire after him.

But our blessed Saviour was likewise crucified between two malefactors, that these words of Isaiah, 'He was numbered with the transgressors (d),' as St. Mark observes, might receive their literal accomplishment. So dearly has it cost the Son of God to obtain for us a place among the Saints in light. That we, who are evil doers, might be numbered among the just, the Just and Holy One of God was to suffer himself to be numbered among the transgressors. Thus we see, that the Providence of God appointed the place where our blessed Saviour was to be crucified.

Secondly, The choice of this place for the crucifixion of our Lord Christ, reminds us of many duties which the Christian religion enjoins. That the place of the crucifixion was without the walls of Jerusalem, and that Jesus was to go up to it out of the city, is mentioned by St.

(c) John iii. 14. viii. 28. xii. 32, 33.

(d) Isaiah liii. 12.

Paul, who observes in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Jesus has thereby fulfilled the type of the sin-offering instituted in the Old Testament (e). 'The bodies of those beasts, says the Apostle, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burnt without the camp.' Hence he draws this conclusion: 'Wherefore Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.' As the blood of the sacrifices on the great day of atonement was brought into the sanctuary, and their bodies were burned without the city; so Jesus, who also suffered without Jerusalem, is the true Sacrifice of Atonement; and his blood was carried into the heavenly sanctuary for the atonement of the sins of the whole world. But from this circumstance the Apostle further draws this inference: 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.' By this going forth without the camp St. Paul, indeed, chiefly denotes a departing forth from the Jewish religion, which was at that time extremely corrupt, and all its outward ceremonies, which were superseded by Christ. He exhorts the converted Hebrews, that they would no longer adhere to types and shadows; but, relinquishing the Jewish worship, to acknowledge Christ to be the only High Priest, and his sacrifice the only sacrifice of atonement. He farther advises them to appropriate that propitiatory sacrifice to themselves by faith unto salvation, though they might on that account be partakers of the

(e) Heb. xiii. 11, 12.

(f) Verse 13.

reproach

reproach of Christ. By going forth unto Christ without the camp, the Apostle also exhorts us to depart from all the sinful ways of the world, which do not agree with our profession, as followers of a crucified Saviour. Let us therefore refrain from a conformity with the world, which lieth in wickedness. Let us depart from the company of the wicked, where the blood of the Son of God is trampled under foot. Let us go forth from the Sodom of carnal pleasures, wantonness, intemperance, &c. which are by no means consistent with our holy profession. Let us go forth to Christ, that we may bear his reproach, and be partakers of his sufferings. Though the world should ridicule us, and look down on us with contempt; though we should be numbered among transgressors, and condemned to an infamous death; Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, has already sanctified these hardships by his sufferings. To those who believe in him, and suffer for his name, Christ has made reproaches, racks, and tortures, as it were, the steps by which they ascend to the mansions of glory. It must therefore be our fixed resolution, rather to die with him on Golgotha, than deny his truth, and be ashamed of his reproach. For unless we are willing patiently to take upon us his reproach, we shall not be partakers of his everlasting glory. May the Lord Jesus of his infinite grace grant us such a temper.

II.

We come now, in the second place, to consider the preparation that was made for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. This was done by giving him a very disagreeable and bitter potion; and here we shall take notice of the behaviour of the soldiers on one hand, and of the Lamb of God on the other.

As for the soldiers, they were full of insolence and cruelty. For, after they had with great difficulty brought the blessed Jesus to Mount Golgotha, who was now wearied and quite spent; they endeavoured, while some of them erected the cross, to force him to drink a bitter potion which they had carried with them for that purpose. It was customary among the Jews to give those who were to suffer a violent death, a rich cordial of wine mixed with all kind of spices, to drink just before they were executed. This custom might be derived from these words of Solomon: 'Give strong drink
' unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to
' those that be of heavy heart; let him drink
' and forget his poverty, and remember his
' misery no more (g).' The Jews used to put a grain or two of frankincense in this liquor, in order to intoxicate the malefactor's senses, that he might be the less terrified at the apprehensions of the cruel death he was going to suffer, and be rendered less sensible of the pains

(g) Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7.

of it *. This Jewish custom was here so far observed, that a certain liquor was offered to Jesus to drink before his crucifixion; but even this indulgence was likewise inhumanly abused, for, instead of a cordial, the liquor offered to Christ was extremely bitter, loathsome, and distasteful. According to St. Mark, it was wine mingled with myrrhe, and St. Matthew calls it vinegar mingled with gall; for in mixing this liquor they used four wine, little different from vinegar, and by dissolving myrrhe in it, had made it so bitter, that by the taste one would have taken it for a mixture of vinegar and gall †. Whether the Jews themselves mixed this liquor, or whether the Roman soldiers did it at the instigation of the Jews, it betrays the most inveterate malice and insatiable cruelty in our blessed Saviour's enemies, who even contrive to embitter the last moments of his life by giving him this nauseous potion. They treated him on this occasion worse than the most notorious malefactor. For we do not find that any such

* In *Babyl. Sanhedrin. f. 43. 1.* Prodeunti ad supplicium capitis potum dederunt, granumque thuris in poculo vini, ut turbaretur intellectus ejus, sicut dicitur: *Date siceram perituro, et vinum mœrenti animo.*

† Paulo aliter Jo. LIGHTFOOT (in *Horis ad Matth. xxvii. 34*) MARCUM sic intelligo: *Dederunt ei, pro more gentis, poculum illud, quod ad supplicium ductis dari solebat; est (quod MATTHÆUS refert) tunc minimè consuetâ mixturâ, vino scilicet et thure aut myrrhâ, sed in majus ludibrium, et ex acriore virulentia, aceto et felle repletum.* Adde CL. TRILLERI notas ad GROTII *Christum Patientem*, p. 401, et seqq.

liquor was offered to the two malefactors, who were crucified with Jesus.

But let us enquire how the Lamb of God behaved on this occasion. The Evangelists inform us, that 'When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink; so that he received it not.' Thus He tasted this bitter nauseous draught, and permitted some drops to moisten his parched mouth; but He refused to drink up the bitter potion which was offered to him. At the same time, the hand of God restrained the brutal enemies of the blessed Jesus, so that they did not compel him to drink the mixture they had prepared for him.

But we are not to suppose that our blessed Saviour refused to take this cup out of mere delicacy, because the taste displeased him: He did it rather from wise and just motives. We have observed above, that such liquors were given to malefactors to drink, just before they were executed, with a double view; which was either to intoxicate the malefactor's senses; or to throw him into such a stupor, as to make him less sensible of the pangs of death; or perhaps, to hasten his death, that he might be sooner out of his pain. But neither of the two last could take place in our blessed Saviour; and probably it was the least of his enemies intentions to alleviate or shorten his pains. At least, he did not desire to lessen his sufferings; but was willing to feel them to the last instant of his life, and, for our good, to taste and
swallow

swallow death in all its bitterness (*b*). He was induced by the most exalted love, to offer up himself to his Father amidst the most painful sensations, and voluntarily to lay down his life in the hour which he had appointed for it. The first motive to drink this potion was likewise incompatible with our blessed Saviour's character: For He was resolved to preserve his soul in soberness and serenity, and not to die like an intoxicated slave of Satan; especially, as he had still several important things to say on the Cross, and many remarkable prophecies of Scripture to fulfil. At the same time, our blessed Saviour defeats the purpose of Satan, which he thought to execute by means of these sons of Belial. It was their design to have deprived him of his senses, so that whatever he said might be indecent and foolish; that he might curse his enemies, and behave like a frantic person. But this expectation of the devil and our Saviour's enemies was baffled; for Jesus declined drinking the liquor, which had been prepared in order to make him an object of ridicule. These were probably the wise motives of our blessed Lord's behaviour on this occasion. Hence we may learn these truths.

1. It is the temper of the world to endeavour, that every thing may be embittered and rendered disagreeable to the members of Jesus Christ.

(*b*) Hebr. ii. 9.

Of this we have a notorious instance in the behaviour of our Saviour's enemies. The men of this world cannot find in their hearts to shew the smallest, and most usual kind offices, to the godly; and when there is an unavoidable necessity of so doing, they are very industrious so to embitter every indulgence shewn them, that the children of God shall be little the better for it. All their cordials are mingled with gall, and in all their consolations there is a large portion of vinegar; and even under the specious appearance of doing good, they endeavour to molest and afflict them. To this hardship the servants of God must inure themselves; and they may be assured once for all, that, instead of any comfort from the world, all they have to expect is an increase of their reproach and misery. Their glorious Chief fared no better; and therefore they are not to expect any other treatment.

2. Jesus Christ, by tasting the bitterness of this nauseous potion, was to expiate the voluptuous delicacy of our taste, and to acquire for us a right to the taste of God's love and sweet consolation.

He did not indeed drink up this liquor; but he tasted it, and consequently experienced its bitterness. This bitterness is not only an emblem of the bitterness of sin, which is frequently compared in Scripture to gall, vinegar, wormwood, and other distasteful things; but of the curse and chastisement due to sin. Hence the Prophet says, ' Ye have turned judgment into

‘ gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock (*k*).’ Hence the Scripture in another place attributes to God an intoxicating cup, the dregs of which all the wicked shall wring out, and drink them (*l*).’ The Lord also thus threatens sinners, by his Prophet: ‘ I will feed this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink (*m*).’ The bitterness, which would have been our eternal potion, our Mediator has once tasted, in order thereby to expiate all the sins of the penitent, to administer to them the sweets of Divine comfort at the hour of death, and to give them an antepast of eternal felicity.

Therefore, reflect ye, who still drink the intoxicating cup of Satan, what the blessed Jesus suffered to obtain for you a right to the grace of God, and his sweet consolations. Oh forbear thus greedily to drink iniquity like water (*n*), which will cause woe and bitterness perhaps in this world, and in the next torture without end! Be not afraid of the bitter myrrhe of godly sorrow, which is far preferable to the false sweetness of sinful pleasures. Is it not better to mourn for a short time, than to grieve for ever? Is it not better here to drink a bitter potion in the fellowship of Christ, and afterwards to be eternally exhilarated with the delights of paradise, than to be intoxicated with the cup of sin? As for you, who have tasted of the love of God,

(*k*) Amos vi. 12.

(*m*) Jer. ix. 15.

(*l*) Psalm lxxv. 9. Isaiah li. 17.

(*n*) Job xvi. 15.

and the sweetness of his consolations, know that you owe this to the bitterness of suffering, which your Mediator has tasted in your stead. Let this consideration move you to a more ardent love of him, who has emptied your cup of sufferings of all its bitterness, and alleviated your afflictions, by mingling with them the sweets of his enlivening comforts.

III.

In the next place, we are to consider the Crucifixion itself. St. John, who is known to have been present, describes this transaction in a very succinct manner, 'where they crucified him.' It seems as if this Evangelist, when he was going to describe this bloody and barbarous action, was so affected with the melancholy subject, that the tender love he bore to his Divine Master would not suffer him to dwell upon the particulars. The Roman manner of crucifying malefactors was as follows. The cross being first raised perpendicularly, and firmly fixed in the ground, the criminal who was to be fastened on it was stripped naked, and so exposed to the public view, without the least covering *. Then the soldiers lifted him on a piece of timber, which projected from the

* ARTEMIDORUS, *Onicrit.* Lib. II. C. 58. γυμνοὶ γὰρ σταυροῦνται, i. e. nudi crucifiguntur.

erect

erect beam of the cross, like a kind of seat †, and so placed him on it, that the legs hung down on each side of this seat ‡. Then they proceeded to stretch out the upper part of the body, and to extend both arms; and, having first bound them to the transverse beam of the cross, nailed them to it with large iron-nails ||, driven through the palms of each hand. Lastly, the legs were stretched out; and being placed close to each other, each of them was separately nailed to the perpendicular beam of the cross. In this ignominious and painful manner, according to the most probable conjectures, was the Lord of life crucified.

† Perspicuè testatur JUSTINUS MARTYR, in *dialogo cum Tryphone*, p. 318. Ed. Paris. MDCXXXVI. ubi in descriptione partium crucis mentionem facit ligni, quod fuerit εν μεσση πηγωνμενον, ως κερας καί αὐτο ἐξέχον, ἐφ' ᾧ ἐποχύνται οἱ σταθμεύοντες, i. e. in medio crucis fixum, velut cornu prominens, cui insident crucifixi. Similiter IRENÆUS *adv. Hær. Lib. II. C. XLII.* Ipse habitus crucis fines et summitates habet quinque: duos in latitudine, et unum in medio, in quo requiescit, qui clavis afficitur. Omni fide digna esse hæc JUSTINI et IRENÆI de crucis figura testimonia, inde apparet, quia ipsorum ætate crucis supplicium adhuc in usu erat, à Constantino Magno deinceps abrogatum. Huc etiam refer verba Mæcenatis apud Senecam: *Acuta si sedeam cruce.* Adde ANT. BYNÆI *Geceusigten Christum*, p. 630, THOM. BARTHOLINUM *de cruce*, et CASP. SAGITTARIUM. in *Hist. Passonis Christi*, p. 794.

‡ Huc alludunt locutiones veterum: *ascendere crucem*, *infilire in crucem*, (tanquam in equum) *tolli*, *levari in crucem*, &c. Interdum quidem etiam malefici cruci in terra jacenti affigebantur, et cum ea erigebantur, sed id rarius fiebat.

|| Hinc Mercurius ad Prometheum crucifigendum apud Lucianum; *Porrige dextram tuam, et tu, Vulcane, alliga ipsam, et clavis transfige.*

But the extraordinary pain and ignominy with which this punishment was attended, will appear more evident, if we consider,

1. That the person who was to be crucified was stripped from head to foot, and thus was fastened to the cross quite naked *, in the sight of a vast number of spectators. What an indignity was this, for this Divine Teacher, and Prophet, the supreme Messenger of the heavenly Father! The Roman Laws ordered none to be crucified but the worst of malefactors, who were deemed unworthy to tread on the earth; but the Divine Law farther annexes a particular execration on this punishment, for he that is hanged is said to be accursed of God (o). This punishment was likewise extremely painful. For as the criminal was previously scourged, when his garments were taken off they must naturally tear the wounds open again, which must be a very sensible pain. The whole body was so strained on the cross, that the bones were in a manner dislocated, and the ribs appeared so plain that they might be counted (p). The hands and feet were not only stretched and bound with cords, but were also pierced with large nails; and as the sensation is exquisite in these parts of the body, by reason of the many ramifications of the nerves with which they are stored, we may

* Pluribus id probat CASP. SAGITTARIUS in *Harm. Hist. Passionis Jesu Christi*, part. II. p. 761. *seqq.*

(o) Deut. xxi. 23.

(p) Ps. xxii. 17.

naturally

naturally think that the nailing of them must occasion the most excruciating pains. After all this, the body, torn by the scourges and pierced by the nails, remained for some hours in the open air, slowly bleeding to death, and languishing under inexpressible torture.

Oh, what an astonishing humiliation is this ! that the Lord of Glory should take on him such a painful and infamous death, and be obedient to his Father, even to the death of the cross ; that those hands should be pierced, which spread out the heavens, and by their touch had healed so many impotent and sick ; that nails should be driven through those feet, to which a promise is given, that all enemies shall lie down before them in the dust ; that He, from whom all derive their clothing, should be stripped of his garments ; that the King of Israel should be an abomination, and the Deity become a curse.

Upon these circumstances of our Saviour's passion, let us make the following observations.

First, As the place where our blessed Lord was crucified, was not chosen without God's direction ; so neither was the punishment of crucifixion appointed for the Saviour of the world without the wisest views. For this sort of death was very suitable to the mystery of our redemption, as will appear by the following particulars.

1. It aptly represented Christ's mediatorial office ; for as he here hung between heaven
and

74 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

and earth, so He was that exalted and adorable Person who was to adjust the concerns of mankind with God, and reconcile heaven and earth.

2. By this lingering punishment on the cross, where the crucified person lived several hours, and some times two or three days, our Saviour's patience, resignation, and obedience was most properly tried, and his inconceivable love to the human race displayed to the admiration of Angels and men.

3. By reason of the curse annexed to this death, it was the best adapted to Him, who was to be a curse, in order to obtain a blessing for us.

4. By this ignominious and painful death, the justice of God, and his extreme hatred of sin, were signally manifested.

5. It was a punishment by which the sacred blood of Christ, which was to be our ransom, and to purify our consciences from dead works, was to be abundantly shed.

6. This exaltation of Christ on the cross was a type of his future exaltation to the right hand of God.

7. Lastly, The wisdom of God had before, by many types and prophecies in the Old Testament, signified that the Messiah was to die by this kind of punishment. The prophecies of David and Zachariah (*q*) were particularly fulfilled by our Saviour's crucifixion. The offer-

(*q*) Pf. xxii. and Zech. xii. 10.

ing of Isaac, the erecting of a Brazen Serpent, the Paschal Lamb, and indeed all sacrifices, which were lifted up, and laid on the Altar to be consumed by fire, were types which prefigured the death of Christ on the cross. Let us therefore humbly adore the infinite Wisdom of God, which, from such wise motives, appointed this sort of punishment to be inflicted on our Mediator. Let us admire the Father's unspeakable love, in thus giving up his only begotten Son to the most ignominious and painful death. But let us also gratefully revere the transcendent love of the Son, in descending from the Throne of God to die on the cross, and humbling himself below the comprehension of man or Angel.

Secondly, The crucifixion of Christ is to be accounted the most essential part of his sufferings.

By our Saviour's suffering on the tree, our sin which was committed at the Tree of Knowledge, and the innumerable transgressions which have been the consequences of our Fall, are expiated. Our Mediator, by permitting his hands to be extended, and nailed to the cross, has satisfied for our first Parents sin, in stretching forth their sinful hands to the forbidden fruit. By suffering his sacred feet to be nailed to the cross, he has satisfied for their approach to the forbidden tree, and our voluntary choice of the ways of perdition, if we leave them by repentance. By suffering himself to be raised
up

up as a gazing-stock, while he expired by such an ignominious and painful death, he has atoned for the presumptuous arrogance of our first Parents, by which they attempted to lift themselves up to the very Throne of God, and impiously wished to have no superior. Oh wonderful love! worthy subject of our continual meditations, and deserving our most grateful acknowledgements! So deep an humiliation, so low an abasement of a person of such transcendent dignity, must necessarily be productive of glorious and wonderful effects. On this cross our reconciliation was atchieved (*r*). On this cross peace was concluded betwixt heaven and earth (*f*). On this cross the handwriting, that was against us, was cancelled, blotted out, and taken away (*t*). On this cross the curse was repealed, and the blessing obtained (*u*). This cross is as it were the ladder by which man ascends to heaven, and the Throne of Grace, where the sinner finds pardon and forgiveness. This is the triumphal car of the Commander in Chief of God's Host. Here he triumphed over sin, which he bore in his own body on the cross. Here he triumphed over the power of Satan, whose head was bruised by the heel of Him who trod the old serpent under foot. Here he triumphed over the curse of the Law, and placed his redeemed in perfect security. Here, at the same time, he hung,

(*r*) Eph. ii. 16.(*t*) Col. ii. 14.(*f*) Col. i. 20.(*u*) Gal. iii. 13, 14.

as it were, in the most endearing attitude, extending his arms in order to gather in and embrace all the truly penitent. Let us learn from our blessed Saviour's crucifixion, how we are to crucify the old man, and to mortify self-conceit, self-love, and every inordinate desire. Henceforth the world must be crucified unto us; and, the lust of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, must be as loathsome in our eyes as an executed malefactor. Henceforth we must harbour no sinful thoughts, no vicious desires which are displeasing to our crucified Saviour. Henceforth the reproach of Christ must be our glory, and his Cross our standard by which we must live and die. We must say to our Redeemer, as faithful Ittai did to David, 'As the Lord liveth, surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be (x).' Oh blessed fellowship of the Cross, the consequence of which is a fellowship of glory!

IV.

We come now, in the last place, to consider our blessed Lord's intercession for his enemies during his crucifixion. St. Luke observes that when they crucified the blessed Jesus, he cried out 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' In all appearance, these words were uttered by our blessed Saviour while the

(x) 2 Sam. xv. 21.

Roman soldiers were extending his sacred body, and nailing it to the Cross. While their impious hands were employed in treating the Son of God in the most injurious manner, he, as a merciful High Priest, employs his tongue in praying for them, and intercedes with the justice of God to pardon and forgive them. 'Father, forgive them.' How properly does Jesus here use the endearing title of Father, when by the most generous love of his inveterate enemies he so gloriously resembles his heavenly Father, whose exuberant goodness extends to the unthankful, and to the evil (y). In this address of the Son of God to his Father, we may observe an intercession, and an excuse, for his merciless enemies. He intercedes with his heavenly Father, that he would forgive these his blind unthinking creatures the grievous sin, which they were now committing against his beloved Son, and that he would grant them time and grace for repentance. As some alleviation and excuse for their perpetrating this atrocious deed, he alledges their ignorance, and supplicates his Father to look on these wretched men with eyes of mercy and compassion, to pity their want of understanding, and to bring them out of their blindness and ignorance into the light of the Gospel. Behold a Prophet far surpassing Moses in meekness and gentleness! Behold a gracious Monarch, who takes more delight in pardoning

(y) Luke vi. 28, 35, 36.

and

and forgiving his subjects, than in rigour and severity ! Behold a merciful High Priest, who has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way (z), and even when he is on the point of offering himself up for a sacrifice, prays that his enemies may have the first fruits of the atonement which he made for sin ! But these words of our Lord Jesus have on another occasion been explained at large, and published separately *.

However, as these words of our blessed Saviour proceeded from the most fervent love and affection, they should leave behind them a salutary impression on our hearts, and serve as a blessed encouragement to draw sinners into the arms of his mercy ; those sinners who are, as it were, within the jaws of death ; those sinners who have run such terrible lengths as to seem past hopes of mercy ; those sinners who have received mercy, but forfeited it again ; and those less heinous sinners who, after receiving a due portion of Divine Grace, are conscious of many sins of infirmity and surprise. Blessed is the man who, by a grateful love of his crucified Saviour, is moved eternally to renounce sin and its accursed service, and is determined to offer himself up to Him who ‘ not only loved his ‘ own,’ but also his very enemies.

(z) Heb. v. 2.

* In the Author's *Betrachtungen über die sieben letzten worte des gecreuzigten JESU*, or ‘ Considerations on the seven Last Words of the crucified Jesus. W.

THE

THE PRAYER.

WE adore thy perfect love, O merciful Saviour, which humbled thee even to the Cross, that thou mightest exalt us to the throne of God. Eternally praised be thy name, O blessed Jesus, that for us rebels and outlaws thou didst vouchsafe to become a curse on the Cross, that the copious stream of Divine blessings might flow upon us. Be thou forever praised, who didst condescend to be raised on the Cross, as the great Antitype of the brazen serpent which was lifted up in the desert, that all who look on thee in faith may be healed, and live (*a*). O fulfill in us all that comfortable promise, that after thy exaltation thou wouldest draw all men unto thee! (*b*) Draw to thy Cross the carnal, the secure, and the licentious; and convince them, that without crucifying their lusts, they can have no share in the blessings which thou didst procure by thy crucifixion. Draw to thy Cross the troubled, anxious, and timorous consciences, and heal them by the salutary sight of thy sufferings. Draw to thy Cross thy true disciples, and grant that they may more and more increase in grace and wisdom, and in the knowledge of thee. O gather together all those who are scattered abroad, far from thee

(*a*) John iii. 14.(*b*) xii. 32.

and the light of thy Gospel, and embrace them with the arms of thy mercy. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IV.

The sacrifice of Isaac, a type of the great sacrifice and crucifixion of CHRIST.

Genesis xxii. 1—19.

‘ AND it came to pass after these things,
‘ that God did tempt Abraham, and
‘ said unto him, Abraham! And he said,
‘ Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now
‘ thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou
‘ lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;
‘ and offer him there for a burnt offering upon
‘ one of the mountains, which I will tell thee
‘ of. And Abraham rose up early in the
‘ morning, and saddled his ass, and took two
‘ of his young men with him, and Isaac his
‘ son; and clave the wood for the burnt offer-
‘ ing, and rose up, and went unto the place
‘ of which God had told him. Then on the
‘ third day, Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw
‘ the place afar off. And Abraham said unto
‘ his young men, Abide you here with the
‘ ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and
‘ worship, and come again to you. And Abra-
‘ ham took the wood of the burnt offering,
‘ and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took
VOL. III. G the

' the fire in his hand, and a knife : and they
 ' went both of them together. And Isaac
 ' spake unto Abraham his father, and said,
 ' My father ! and he said, Here am I, my
 ' son. And he said, Behold the fire and
 ' wood ; but where is the lamb for a burnt
 ' offering ? And Abraham said, My son, God
 ' will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offer-
 ' ing : so they went both of them together.
 ' And they came to the place which God had
 ' told him of, and Abraham built an altar
 ' there, and laid the wood in order ; and bound
 ' Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon
 ' the wood. And Abraham stretched forth
 ' his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
 ' And the Angel of the Lord called unto him
 ' out of heaven, and said, Abraham ! Abra-
 ' ham ! and he said, Here am I. And he said,
 ' Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do
 ' thou any thing unto him ; for now I know
 ' that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not
 ' with-held thy son, thine only son from me.
 ' And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked ;
 ' and behold, behind him a ram caught in a
 ' thicket by his horns : and Abraham went
 ' and took the ram, and offered him up for a
 ' burnt offering in the stead of his son. And
 ' Abraham called the name of that place Je-
 ' hovah-jireh, as it is called to this day *. And
 ' the

* This verse is very obscurely rendered in our translation :
 the true meaning of it is ' Abraham called the name of the
 ' place

‘ the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham
 ‘ out of heaven the second time, and said, By
 ‘ myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for
 ‘ because thou hast done this thing, and hast
 ‘ not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in
 ‘ blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying
 ‘ I will multiply thy seed as the stars of hea-
 ‘ ven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-
 ‘ shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of
 ‘ his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the
 ‘ nations of the earth be blessed, because thou
 ‘ hast obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned
 ‘ unto his young men, and they rose up, and
 ‘ went together to Beer-sheba, and dwelt
 ‘ there.

As I have observed in the last Consideration,
 that the sacrifice of Isaac was one of the
 types which prefigured the crucifixion of
 Christ *, it will not be improper to insert in
 this place a particular Consideration on this
 glorious type, and thus to diversify the affect-
 ing piece of our blessed Saviour’s crucifixion,
 as it were, with light and shade. The Spirit
 of God has been pleased to intimate to us, that
 several incidents which happened to the Messiah
 are prefigured and typified in the account of
 this remarkable transaction. For St. Paul

‘ place *Jehova-jireh*, i. e. the Lord will see or provide; and to
 ‘ this day it retains the name of *Har-jehovah-jireh*, or the mount
 ‘ *Jehova-jireh*.’ *W.*

* De reliquis typis crucis Christi in Vet. Test. videri possunt
 CAMP. VITRINGA, in *Observat. Sacris*, Lib. II. Cap. 11—15.

in the Epistle to the Hebrews (c), in which he explains several types exhibited in the Old Testament, makes this observation: 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting, that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure *.'

Here we see in what light Isaac is to be considered in this whole transaction, namely, as the type of Jesus Christ; who was the centre to which every part of the preceding Divine œconomy tended, and the great Antitype or substance of all the shadowy types of the Old Testament. This is the Seed which was promised to Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth was to be blessed; for the Angel sayeth not, 'And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (d).' Our blessed Lord represents himself as the Antitype of Isaac, and the rejected Ishmael as a type of the carnal Jews, when he says, 'The

(c) Chap. xi. 17, 18, 19.

* *Εν παραβολῇ* rectè vertitur, *in typo*. conf. Hebr. ix. 9. Vox ista quamlibet *similitudinem* denotat, sive in *verbis*, ut Matth. xiii. 3-10. sive in *rebus*. Uti enim verba, per aures ad animum translata, statim typum sive imaginem rei menti representant: ita etiam res aliqua rei adumbratæ imaginem menti exhibet atque fillit. Ita qui agnum loco hominis immolari videbat, ei per hanc veluti realem parabolam mors Christi, vicaria proponebatur.

(d) Gal. iii. 16.

servant

‘ servant abideth not in the house for ever ; but
 ‘ the Son abideth ever (e).’ St. Paul likewise
 manifestly alludes to the account of the sacri-
 fice of Isaac, when he observes in the Epistle
 to the Romans, that ‘ God spared not his own
 ‘ Son (f) ; which words seem to allude to those
 of God to Abraham, ‘ Now I know that thou
 ‘ fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held
 ‘ thy son, thine only son from me (g).’ These
 intimations of the Holy Spirit are a sufficient
 warrant for our entering deeper into this re-
 markable history, and tracing in it the mystery
 of Christ.

The road here is already beaten for us ;
 since, from the very commencement of the
 Christian religion, Isaac has been always look-
 ed upon as a lively type of the Messiah, and his
 sacrifice of himself. Even the ancient Jewish
 church perceived the mystery of this transaction,
 and believed that the binding of Isaac, in or-
 der to be sacrificed, was a type of the Messiah,
 by the sacrifice of whom God was to be re-
 conciled to the Jews. But the Jewish church
 afterwards totally apostatized from the faith of
 their ancestors, and expected the Messiah to
 appear as a Temporal Prince. The later Jews be-
 ing under this delusion, attributed the reconcili-
 ation of Israel to Isaac’s being bound. Ac-
 cordingly the modern Jewish writings are full

(e) John viii. 35.
 (g) Gen. xxii. 12.

(f) Rom. viii. 32.

of the importance of this transaction *; and in their Devotions on every New-year's-day, they beseech God that he would be pleased to think of Isaac's being bound, and that he will be gracious to them for the sake of his bonds. Thus that obstinate, infatuated people ascribe to the type what they ought to seek for in the great Antitype. Blessed be God for that light which is risen on us in the Gospel, by the help of which we see, in all the circumstances of the history of this transaction, a very great resemblance with the circumstances of the crucifixion of Christ.

The two principal persons mentioned in the history of this remarkable transaction are Abraham and Isaac. The former of these was a type of the heavenly Father, and the latter a type of Jesus Christ his only begotten Son.

With regard to Abraham, as he was a father who had an uncommon tenderness and affection for his children, so that it was with great difficulty and reluctance he was prevailed on to consent that Ishmael, though rude and petulant, should be turned out of doors; much greater must have been the violence offered to his paternal heart, when he submitted to put to death his beloved and obedient son Isaac. Thus God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is love itself. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should live; much less would he desire the death of his innocent

* Vid. JOHANNIS FRISCHMUTHI Dissertat. de *Ligatione Isaaci*.
Son

Son, had not his justice required such a satisfaction.

However, as Abraham, at the Divine command, spared not his beloved Son, but willingly prepared to put him to death; so likewise the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ determined, at the demand of his justice, to give his only Son up to death for us, that in him should be accomplished (*b*) what his wise counsel had before determined to be done.

As Abraham, in his ready willingness to offer up his Son at the Divine command, gave the highest proof of his love to God; so the heavenly Father has given the highest proof of his tender love to man, since he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up a sacrifice for us all. ‘ In this, saith St. John, was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him (*i*).’

Abraham himself carried the knife in his hand, in order to sacrifice his son, together with the fire to kindle the pile of wood under the burnt offering. In like manner, the heavenly Father has shewn the rigour of his justice in his Son’s sufferings, and drawn it against our surety as a sharp sword, which he thus addresses: ‘ Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered (*k*).’

(*b*) Acts iv. 28.

(*i*) 1 John iv. 9.

(*k*) Zach. xiii. 7.

As to the other principal person concerned in this mysterious transaction, namely Isaac; he represents our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was the great Antitype prefigured by all the types of the Old Testament.

Isaac was the only son of his Father, being his only child by Sarah, and consequently he was heir to all his possessions (*l*); a child whose birth had been promised long before, and whose coming into the world had been expected for several years. Christ likewise is the only begotten Son of the Father (*m*), whom God hath appointed heir of all things (*n*); a Son whose coming into the world was expected by all holy men for four thousand years, and who was preceded by many gracious promises; a Son who, like Isaac, was named before his birth, and, contrary to the usual course of nature, was produced, by the Divine power, from the barren womb of a virgin, as Isaac was conceived in the dead womb of Sarah (*o*). Isaac was a son for whom his father had the tenderest affection; for the omniscient God says to him, 'Take thou thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou LOVEST.' The like circumstance the Scripture relates also concerning Jesus Christ. He is called God's dear Son (*p*). He was begotten of the eternal love of the Father, who himself sent a voice from heaven, saying,

(*l*) Gen. xxv. 5.

(*n*) Heb. i. 3.

(*p*) Col. i. 13.

(*m*) John i. 18.

(*o*) Gen. xviii. 14. Luke i. 35, 37.

' This

‘ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (q). John the Baptist beareth witness that ‘ The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand (r),’ as Abraham gave all his possessions to his beloved son Isaac.

Isaac was a very obedient son, who, instead of making an ill use of his father’s affectionate tenderness, always honoured him with the most unreserved obedience and submission; and in this transaction more particularly, he gave an astonishing proof of it in a very extraordinary case, at the very thought of which nature itself shudders. He patiently submitted, without making any remonstrance against the will of God, and of his father. And though he was grown to years of maturity (being supposed to be four and thirty years of age when this happened), and therefore might easily have made his escape from his aged father; yet he suffers Abraham to bind him, to lay him on the wood, and proceed as he pleased. In the same manner also our blessed Saviour might easily have escaped from the hands of his enemies. He had not only sufficient strength in himself to procure his liberty; but also twelve legions of Angels were ready at his command, if he had been inclined to make use of them. But the blessed Jesus was obedient to his Father, even unto death, the painful and ignominious death of the Cross (s).’

(q) Matth. iii. 17. (r) John iii. 35. (s) Philip. ii. 8.
Isaac

Isaac was an innocent son, and, though he was to be put to death by the Divine command, had committed nothing worthy of death. But who was ever more undeservedly led to death than the only, the beloved Son of God, who had always done what was acceptable to his Father? who was holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who knew no sin, and in whose mouth was no guile. Thus Isaac exhibits a lively type of Jesus Christ, the only, the beloved, the obedient, the innocent Son of God.

As to the rest of the circumstances of this transaction between Abraham and Isaac, they bear a striking resemblance to those of our Saviour's passion,

First, In the circumstances preceding the transaction.

Secondly, In the circumstances connected with it.

Thirdly, In the circumstances subsequent to this remarkable transaction.

First, Among the circumstances preceding the transaction, the following deserve particular notice.

1. The land of Moriah was the place appointed, on which Abraham was to sacrifice his son Isaac; so that he was not to be offered up in his father's house, but at a considerable distance from it. A similar circumstance appears in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He was the person typified by all the offerings mentioned
in

in the Old Testament: Hence it might be expected that Christ would have been offered up in the temple, as it was a place dedicated to his Father, and emphatically called the house of God. But as Isaac, the type of Christ, was to have been sacrificed at a distance from his father's house; so was Jesus likewise to be sacrificed without the temple, his heavenly father's house, and in the very place appointed for the sacrificing of Isaac. For as the land of Moriah included a considerable mountainous tract in those parts, it comprehended not only the mountain of that name, on which the temple was built (*t*), but likewise Mount Sion, Mount Akra, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Golgotha. Now as God was pleased to choose one of these eminences in the land of Moriah for this typical offering, it is very probable that he chose that on which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Isaac's great Antitype, was afterwards to be offered up.

2. Isaac by the way to the land of Moriah conversed very affectionately with his Father. 'And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, 'and said, My father!' [where the Chaldee paraphrase uses the word Abba.] And Abraham answered, 'Here am I, my Son.' The same filial affection shines forth in the Lord Jesus; and his first and last sayings, on Mount Golgotha, begun with the endearing title of Father. And his heavenly Father, though not

(*t*) 2 Chron. iii. 1.

in words, answered him in effect, by powerfully strengthening him to undergo his sufferings, as if he had said, Here am I, my Son; and at length received his soul into his hands.

3. Isaac carried the wood on which he was to be laid, and offered for a burnt-offering. 'And Abraham rose up early in the morning, &c. and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it on Isaac his son *.' Thus it is said of our Saviour, that 'he went forth bearing his Cross,' and thus he dragged to the place of execution that heavy piece of timber on which he was afterwards to be sacrificed.

4. Isaac was alone with his father the day on which he was to be sacrificed; the two servants which followed them being left at a distance. Christ was likewise on the day of his crucifixion left by his disciples, who had fled from him the night before, and were dispersed. Yet he was not alone, but conversed with his Father, as he had foretold in these words: 'Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that every man shall be scattered to his own, and shall leave me alone: And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me (u).'

* Ad quem locum Judæi in comment. *Bereschith* minori hæc annotant: Portavit Isaac ligna, quemadmodum vir crucem suam bajulat super humeris suis: observante JO. PEARSONIO, in *Expof. symb. Apost.* pag. 356.

(u) John xvi. 32.

Secondly,

Secondly, Let us consider the circumstances which attended the transaction itself, and we shall find that several circumstances of Christ's crucifixion were exactly prefigured by them.

1. Isaac probably was stripped of his clothes when he was to be sacrificed, according to the usual ceremony on such occasions. For before the victims were placed on the altar to be sacrificed, their skin, which is their apparel, was taken off. Hence it may reasonably be concluded, that in this sacrifice also, the apparel of the intended victim was taken off. It is said of Christ, by St. John (x), 'Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments;' so that the Messiah, like his type, was sacrificed naked.

2. Isaac was bound hand and foot; for it is said in the text, 'And Abraham bound Isaac his son.' Our blessed Saviour's arms were not only bound to the Cross, according to the Roman custom, when he was to drag it up Mount Golgotha; but when he was lifted up on the Cross, after it was erected, his hands were first stretched out and fastened to it with cords, before they were nailed, as we have already observed in the last Consideration.

3. Isaac was lifted from the earth on the altar, and then laid upon the wood. In like manner Christ was lifted up on the wood of the Cross as a public example, and a victim to the Divine justice, as he had foretold to

(x) John xix. 23.

Nicodemus in these words, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (y).'

4. Isaac was laid on the wood entire and alive; a circumstance which deserves particular attention. Those beasts which were appointed for sacrifices were first killed by the side of the altar, and dismembered or severed into several pieces, before they were laid upon it. But Isaac was laid on the altar entire and alive; being appointed as a type or figure of that sacrifice which was to be lifted up on the wood alive, and of which not a bone was to be broken. Could there well be a greater resemblance of concurring circumstances, to adumbrate the crucifixion of Christ, than we behold in the instance before us? If we farther consider the astonishing patience of Isaac, in bearing all this patiently and silently, without any contradiction or repugnance, it exhibits the very image of Jesus Christ, who, amidst all the tortures he endured, did not open his mouth. These are the circumstances which attended the transaction itself; namely, that Isaac was lifted up on the wood, naked, bound, entire, and alive, as a type of the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Among the circumstances subsequent to this transaction, the following are particularly remarkable.

(y) John iii. 14.

I. After

1. After Isaac had been for three days, as it were, dead in his father's heart [for Abraham consigned him, as he thought, to certain death] he was restored to him alive on the third day. Thus on the third day, Christ was also raised from the dead. What happened to Isaac in a figure (z) was fulfilled in our blessed Saviour, the great Antitype, in truth and reality. Here indeed we may observe a deficiency in the type. For Isaac did not actually die ; nor was he actually sacrificed, though Abraham had already put the knife to his throat. However, God was pleased to accept of this obedience of Abraham and Isaac, and presented to the father of the faithful a ram intangled in a thicket, which the good patriarch killed, and sacrificed instead of Isaac his son. But Christ was really sacrificed personally. Here the Divine justice would not accept of the will for the deed: For as there is no remission of sins without shedding of blood, it was necessary that the blood of Christ should be shed in reality. Thus did Jesus really and truly die, and is in reality risen again from the dead. There was none to release the blessed Jesus, no vicarious victim that could supply his place in this great propitiatory sacrifice ; there was no creature in heaven or on earth qualified to finish this sacrifice, which was to appease and satisfy the Divine justice for the sins of mankind.

(z) Heb. xi. 19.

2. Isaac, who had been bound, was likewise released from his bonds on the third day by his father. In the like manner, it is said of the heavenly Father in Scripture (*a*), that he 'hath raised his son by loosing the pains of death,' or as they are called in the Psalms (*b*), 'the snares of death;' and thus set our Surety at liberty, 'it being impossible that he should be holden of death.'

3. Isaac, after this, returned alive to the servants in Abraham's house, and lived with his father; for we find that 'Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba, and dwelt there.' Thus Christ, after appearing alive to his disciples, returned to his Father, by whom he was sent into the world, and in whose house he now eternally dwells, being ministered unto and adored by all the angelic host.

4. After Isaac was, as it were, risen from the dead, he became the father of an innumerable multitude. For he begat Jacob, the father of the twelve Patriarchs; and the latter propagated the race of Abraham, until at length it became as the stars of heaven, and the sand on the sea shore for number, according to the Divine promise which, after this transaction, was confirmed by an oath in the following words: 'By myself have I sworn that in blessing I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed as the stars

(*a*) Acts ii. 24.

(*b*) Psal. xviii. 5.

‘ of the heaven, and as the sand which is
 ‘ upon the sea-shore ; and thy seed shall possess
 ‘ the gate of his enemies.’ In like manner,
 the prophet says of the Messiah, who died, and
 rose again, ‘ When thou shalt make his soul
 ‘ an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he
 ‘ shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of
 ‘ the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall
 ‘ see of the travail of his soul, and shall be
 ‘ satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous
 ‘ servant justify many ; for he shall bear their
 ‘ iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a
 ‘ a portion with the great ; and he shall divide
 ‘ the spoil with the strong (c).’ Thus Christ
 is become the father of an innumerable multi-
 tude of children, many of whom he has already
 translated to glory ; and all the promises of
 God are, as it were, sealed anew and ratified
 by his resurrection (d).

No rational man will imagine, that all these
 remarkable circumstances should thus concur
 fortuitously in these two remarkable events.
 Certainly, the hand of infinite Wisdom must
 have interfered in the affair, and so directed
 the several incidents, as collectively to form a
 complete type or representation of the sacrifice
 and resurrection of Christ.

Let us therefore, first, Admire the veracity
 and faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises.
 By the crucifixion of Jesus Christ he has actually
 accomplished what he had prefigured by this

(c) Isa. liii. 10—12.

(d) Heb. vi. 13—20.

type several centuries before, and, at the same time, verified the saying of faithful Abraham, ' God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.'

Secondly, Let us acknowledge the justice of God; since he would not spare his only, his beloved, his innocent, and obedient son. For after he had taken our sins on himself, and appeared in our stead before the Divine tribunal, as that lamb which was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world; he was stripped of all his apparel, bound, and lifted up alive on the cross; where his blood was shed in order to appease the justice of God, and to blot out our sins. Who does not in this proceeding see the great hatred and abhorrence which God bears to sin, and his severity in punishing it? It should therefore impress a holy fear on our hearts, and remind us of the words of our blessed Lord, viz. ' If these things be done in ' a green tree,' if the obedient and innocent Son of God be thus punished, ' what will be ' done to the dry?'

Thirdly, But let us also here adore the inconceivable love of the heavenly Father to the human race, who, as it were, did violence to his own paternal heart; sent his only beloved Son from his bosom; and for us, who had offended him by all manner of wickedness, delivered him up to a painful and ignominious death.

Let

Let us, in the last place, consider the inference which St. Paul makes on this occasion :
' He that spared not his own Son, but delivered
' him for us all: How shall he not with
' him also freely give us all things?' Nothing is so great, but we may now confidently hope for it from so affectionate a Father. Now we may approach him with faith and confidence, since he is reconciled to us by the death of his Son. If God has raised Isaac from the dead in a figure, and restored again to life his beloved Son as the Antitype, and loosened the bands of death with which he was bound; we may rest assured that his love will not rest here, but will accomplish in us the whole scheme which his goodness planned. He will collect our scattered ashes; he will raise our bodies from dissolution, invest them with splendor and glory, and translate the whole man, soul and body, into the blissful mansions of his house; into which Christ, the great Antitype of Isaac, is long since entered, in order to prepare a place for us.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Heavenly father! we adore thy veracity and justice, and likewise thine infinite love, which moved thee to deliver up to death thine only beloved Son; that we might not be preyed upon by eternal death, as sheep appointed for the slaughter. May this amazing instance of thy

love be always fresh in our minds, and there flourish and grow; so that our cold hearts may be inflamed with returns of reciprocal love to thee, and remain eternally thine. Grant this for the sake of thy beloved son Jesus Christ. Amen.

CONSIDERATION V.

Two remarkable occurrences which followed the crucifixion of CHRIST.

‘ (a) **A**ND Pilate wrote a superscription
 ‘ of his accusation, and put it on
 ‘ the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS
 ‘ OF NAZARETH THE KING OF
 ‘ THE JEWS. This title then read many
 ‘ of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was
 ‘ crucified was nigh to the City; and it was
 ‘ written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.
 ‘ Then said the chief Priests of the Jews to
 ‘ Pilate, Write not, the King of the Jews;
 ‘ but that he said, I am King of the Jews.
 ‘ Pilate answered, What I have written, I
 ‘ have written. Then the soldiers, when they
 ‘ had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and
 ‘ made four parts (to every soldier a part) and
 ‘ also his coat: Now the coat was without seam,
 ‘ woven from the top throughout. They said,
 ‘ therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend
 ‘ it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.

(a) Matth. xxvii. 36, 37. Mark xv. 24, 25, 26. Luke
 xxiii. 34, 38. John xix. 19—24.

‘ And



‘ And they cast lots upon it what every man
‘ should take; that the scripture might be ful-
‘ filled, which saith, They parted my raiment
‘ among them, and for my vesture they did
‘ cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers
‘ did. And sitting down, they watched him
‘ there; and it was about the third hour when
‘ they crucified him.’

In these words we have an account of two remarkable occurrences, which happened at our blessed Saviour’s crucifixion; and these are,

First, The putting up a title or superscription on the cross.

Secondly, The dividing our Saviour’s garments.

I.

Concerning the title of our crucified Saviour, the following circumstances are mentioned by the Evangelists.

1. The author of it; and this was Pilate.
‘ Pilate wrote a superscription,’ *i. e.* he gave orders that it should be written and affixed to the cross. Thus it is said above, ‘ Pilate took
‘ Jesus and scourged him (*b*),’ *i. e.* he gave orders to the soldiers to scourge him; and the same Evangelist afterwards says (*c*), that Pilate put the title on the cross; but this St. Matthew expressly imputes to the soldiers (*d*). Thus

(*b*) John xix. 1.

(*c*) Ibid. verse 19.

(*d*) Chap. xxvii. 27—37.

Pilate is made the author of this superscription, as it was done by his order, and dictated by him. Pilate in this particular acted according to the Roman custom. Among the Jews, it was usual for a cryer to go before persons who were led to execution, and at certain intervals to proclaim publicly to the people the cause of their condemnation. This was sometimes also done among the Romans. But, for the most part, the cause of the malefactor's punishment was written in black-letters on a piece of whitish wood; as the soldiers did on this occasion by Pilate's order.

2. The place where this superscription was put is specified; for it was set up over his head on the cross. This was likewise agreeable to the Roman custom. For the tablet, containing the cause of the criminal's death, was usually carried before him when he was led to his execution; and after the malefactor was fastened on the cross, the superscription was set up just above the transverse beam, directly over the head of the criminal.

3. The words of the superscription are mentioned; and these specified the pretended crime for which Christ suffered death. Our blessed Saviour had, indeed, been charged with many crimes, not one of which could be proved, both before the Spiritual Court, and the civil Judge; but Pilate, in the superscription, confined himself to that article of the accusation, which the Jews had mostly insisted on before his

his Judgment-seat. Now the capital crime alledged against the Lord Jesus before Pilate was, That he said he was Christ, a King (*e*); and when Pilate afterwards went about to release him, being sufficiently convinced of his innocence, the Jews upbraided him with these words: ' If thou let this man go, thou art not ' Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a ' king, speaketh against Cæsar.' When Pilate afterwards brought Jesus out, and exhibited him to the public view of the people, saying unto them, Behold your King; the Jews publicly declared that they had no king but Cæsar, and insisted with loud voices, that he should be crucified, as a mere pretender to the sovereign power. Pilate at last delivered Jesus to be crucified; and at the same time, gave orders for writing on a tablet the cause of his crucifixion, which afterwards was placed over his head on the cross. The superscription, according to St. John who stood by the cross, and may be supposed to have seen and read it, was this: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS, which in substance agrees with St. Matthew's account, namely, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate's design by this title was only to expose the Jews, and ridicule their folly; since they were always in expectation of a king, and when he appeared, they would not rest till they caused him to be crucified. But, that God had other views in

(*c*) Luke xxiii. 2.

permitting this superscription to be set up, I shall endeavour to shew in the sequel.

4. The languages are specified in which the superscription was written. For, according to St. Luke and St. John, it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. It was written in Hebrew, because it was the vernacular tongue of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where our Saviour was crucified; though the dialect then used by the Jews, was something different from the pure, ancient Hebrew. It was written in Greek, because that language was become very common all over the East since the time of Alexander, and was particularly spoken by those Jews, who were dispersed among the Gentiles, and of whom great numbers were now at Jerusalem, on account of the feast. Lastly, it was also written in Latin, because Judea was then a Roman province, and consequently under the dominion of the Roman Emperors, who in their laws and edicts made use of that language. Hence it is very probable, that there was no person then at Jerusalem who could not read this superscription in one of these three languages. And this was Pilate's chief design in causing the title to be written in these different languages, that those who did not understand one language, might by means of another see on what account this celebrated Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, had been put to death, at the urgent solicitations of the Jews, his own people.

5. Lastly,

5. Lastly, A dispute is mentioned, which arose between Pilate and the Jews concerning this title. This was occasioned by the following accident. As the place where Jesus was crucified was near Jerusalem, a great number of Jews resorted thither, and read the superscription of our Saviour's accusation, which was fixed over his head. It may be supposed that when so famous a Prophet, the fame of whose doctrines and miracles was spread all over the country, was hanging on the cross as a criminal betwixt two malefactors; it must have occasioned a great many surmises, and awakened in the minds, both of foreigners and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a curiosity to know the cause of so strange a catastrophe. The chief Priests, observing that various remarks were made on the title by the spectators, immediately dispatched a person of note into the city to Pilate, in order to protest against the superscription, and to desire the Governor would be pleased to order it to be taken down, and another to be set up in its room. They could not digest the form of the title, *viz.* ' This is Jesus the King of the Jews ;' for they were ashamed of such a King, and concluded, that to stile a crucified malefactor their King was an affront to the whole Jewish nation. Therefore, they requested that the superscription might be altered, and instead of ' the King of the Jews,' it should be written, ' He said, I am King of the Jews,' *i. e.* Jesus did indeed pretend to be the King of the Jews ;
but

but we are so far from acknowledging him as such, that, as loyal subjects to the Roman Emperor, we have caused him to be crucified.

However, the chief Priests met with a repulse on this occasion. Pilate, who was not only by nature a churlish and implacable man, but was also chagrined and disgusted at the tumult raised by the Jews, refused to comply with their demands, and made this abrupt answer: 'What I have written, I have written.' As if he had said, What has been written by my command I will abide by; I shall not alter a single tittle of it to humour you; who ought to be very well satisfied with having obtained your principal design. The Rulers of the Jews thought that they had now got the power into their own hands, and as they had teased and awed Pilate into a compliance with their former demand, he would always be their submissive servant. But on this occasion, Pilate once more puts on the imperious air of a Governor, and would no longer be dictated to by the Jews. This resolution, he ought to have shewn before. This is the way of the great ones of this world. When Christ, in his members, has been just fastened to the cross, and the sentence of death has been executed on them, at the instigation of Antichrist; then wicked statesmen, who were the persecutor's tools before, reassume all their superciliousness, and scorn to be the dupes of envious Ecclesiastics any longer. But the hand of God was in this trans-

transaction ; who already began to reduce the enemies of Christ to order, and to embitter their carnal exultations at his death by this disappointment. Here these words of the Psalmist were fulfilled : ‘ The wicked shall see it, ‘ and be grieved ; he shall gnash with his ‘ teeth, and melt away : the desire of the ‘ wicked shall perish (e).’

Hitherto we have considered this superscription only in an historical light. Let us now look something deeper into the counsel of God, which over-ruled this circumstance ; and even from the title which was placed over the head of our crucified Saviour, we may learn the following wholesome doctrines.

1. All the circumstances of the superscription on the cross of Christ were directed by the predetermined counsel and will of God.

We are not to imagine that, because it was agreeable to the Roman customs, God looked on the whole transaction as an unconcerned spectator. If Pilate had his political views in this affair, God had much more exalted motives, agreeable to his infinite wisdom, to permit it. For it is said concerning the passion of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles, that Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, did against Jesus what the hand and Counsel of God had before determined to be done (f). We may therefore be well assured that the hand of God was also concerned

(e) Psalm cxii. 10.

(f) Chap. iv. 27, 28.

in this title or superscription. God directed Pilate in drawing up the form of it; but at the same time restrained him from making any alteration in the title.

First, The hand of God directed Pilate in drawing up the title agreeably to the secret views of the Divine Wisdom. This superscription was designed partly to be a remarkable testimony of our Saviour's innocence; hence Pilate could not charge him with any crime in this superscription, as no guilt appeared in this most holy and innocent High Priest, who hung on the cross between two murderers. It was likewise designed to be a testimony of the dignity and glory of the person who was here crucified. Here JESUS hung on the Cross; that Jesus who was to save his people from their sins; the Saviour of whom all the Prophets testified, that they who believed in him should by his name obtain remission of their sins, and of whom, they, among other things, predicted that he should be called a Nazarene (g): He was therefore to bear this title on the Cross, JESUS OF NAZARETH. He was thus stiled not only because he was brought up in Nazareth, but as he was the Antitype of all the Nazarites of the Old Testament; and sacrificed himself for us, and by the strictest vow had bound himself to the Father as our Surety. JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This last title was given to the blessed Jesus

(g) Matth. ii. 23.

in

in allusion to the writings of the Prophets, where the promised Messiah is described as the King of the Jews: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a KING shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (b). Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy KING cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation, (i), &c.' Therefore, according to the stile of the Prophets, this title was the same as if it had been thus expressed: This is Jesus the Messiah. Moreover, as this royal title of the blessed Jesus was set upon the Cross, it also denotes that his kingdom is not a worldly kingdom, but the kingdom of the Cross; and that the preaching of the Cross should be the means, by which the kingdom of Jesus Christ was to be established among the Jews and Gentiles. Other Sovereigns, at their demise, are deprived of their dignity, and leave their power to others; but this King obtained even in death a most glorious triumph over his enemies; and of him it may be said; that he did not take full possession of his kingdom till after his decease. Lastly, as this title was written in the three languages which were then most known in the

(b) Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

(i) Zach. ix. 9.

world,

world, we are to understand that this Jesus of Nazareth was not only the King of the Jews, who were the descendants of Abraham; but was to be a King over the whole Israel of God, which was to be gathered together from all people, nations, and languages. To all these particulars which the wisdom of God had in view, Pilate was an utter stranger; but he was made the instrument, who unknowingly acted in subservience to the Divine decrees. But

Secondly, The same omnipotent hand, which directed Pilate in drawing up the superscription to be fixed on the cross, also restrained him from giving way to the Jews, who were for making a great alteration in this title. For, since it was to serve as a testimony of our Saviour's innocence, the Jews were by no means to be gratified; who were for charging him with a crime by requesting Pilate to write, 'That he said, I am the King of the Jews.' For, though this was, in some measure, true; Christ having openly declared that he was King of Israel; yet most readers would have annexed quite another meaning to these words, and concluded that Jesus had falsely pretended to be King of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman Emperor; and by this means a cloud would have been cast over his innocence. Besides, as this superscription was to be a testimony of the transcendent dignity and glory of Jesus Christ, the title could not undergo any alter-

alteration; the kingly dignity of Christ being not subject to any change or diminution no more than his kingdom, which is everlasting and unchangeable. Though the world exert itself in noise and tumult, and though the Jews and Gentiles join together in council, and use their united efforts to shake off the yoke of this almighty King; yet, as the Psalmist prophesies, their combined endeavours to dethrone the King, which God has anointed, will at last turn to their own confusion.

Moreover, the circumstances attending this superscription, or title of Christ; comprehended several mysterious traces of future transactions in the kingdom of Christ, which the hand of Divine Providence, has, as it were, delineated therein.

That Pilate, a person of distinction, and the Roman Governor of the province, should himself cause the superscription to be thus written, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,' and then to be set on the cross, was a prophetic intimation that Pagan Sovereigns, Rulers, and Governors, would acknowledge Christ to be the Lord.

This title was not put at the feet of Jesus, but over his head, to signify, that he was a King who was to be looked on as the Head of his church, and whose power was not from below but from above; and that a name should be given him, which was above every name.

This

This superscription was written in three different languages as a presage of the gift of Tongues, imparted at the feast of Pentecost to the Apostles, the heralds of those days ; and shews that all languages would soon acknowledge Jesus to be the Lord, to the glory of God the Father ; that his dominion would be extended more particularly among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans.

The objection, which the Jewish Rulers made against this title, was a sign of the opposition, which the doctrine of Jesus being the Messiah and King of Israel, should afterwards meet with from the unbelieving Jews.

Lastly, no alteration was made in the title out of complaisance to the Jews; this serves to shew that God's decree of exalting Christ to be Head and King of the Church would ever remain unchangeable. Thus the wisdom of God may be traced in all the circumstances attending this superscription.

2. The title which was placed on the cross of Jesus Christ is a table from which we may learn several useful lessons.

1. We may learn from it, that the vain fondness for empty titles must be renounced in following the crucified Jesus.

As glorious as this title appears according to God's secret decrees, it was no less scandalous, at the same time, in the eyes of carnal reason. There was not at that time so despicable a nation

tion under the sun as the Jews were * ; so that to be stiled the King of the Jews, was looked upon by the haughty Romans as far from being any honour. Besides, it must appear very strange for a person who was a King to hang on the cross stripped naked like a slave. Now as the Lord of Glory did not disdain a title, which seemed so reproachful in the eye of the world, should not this dispose us willingly to renounce our fondness for titles, which is grounded on vanity and pride?

Secondly, Whoever will acknowledge Jesus to be his Saviour, and expects to be saved by him, must resolve to take up his cross.

It was certainly for a wise end, that the name of Jesus was set on his cross. For by this circumstance the secret counsel of God designed to intimate, that they who would look on the blessed Jesus as their Saviour and Redeemer, must take on them the cross. Christ and the Cross are, as it were, inseparably connected ; and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. But alas ! how many are unhappily industrious in finding means to separate Christ and the Cross. A Saviour they readily embrace ; but few choose a Saviour who will lay the cross on them. How few assume the same motto with St. Paul, ‘ God forbid that I should glory, save in the

* Tacitus Judæos vocat *despectissimam servientium partem*.
Annal. Lib. VIII. C. 5.

114 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

‘cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (k).’ The cross is now sweetened, and rendered honourable; since Christ our Saviour hung on it, with his glorious title fastened to it over his sacred head.

Thirdly, Whoever owns the blessed Jesus for his king must also be willing to enter into the fellowship of his reproach.

Jesus is, in the title, termed a king; yet behold him in the most disgraceful reproach, hanging betwixt heaven and earth. Thus believers likewise are kings and priests to God; and yet how despicable does their kingly dignity appear to the eyes of the world, as it is now hidden under the cross? During the Pagan persecutions it was usual, when they led a martyr to execution, to carry before him a table on which was written the cause of his death, in these words: “This is a Christian *.” If we lived in those times should we, when asked about our profession, have readily answered, I am a Christian? It is to be feared, that if the consequence of such a declaration were death, many of us would hesitate, and be at a stand. However, we must be ready to undergo something for the sake of our King when called upon to suffer. Did our blessed Saviour for our sake

(k) Gal. vi. 14.

* Ita de *Attalo* martyre refert EUSEBIUS, *Histor. Eccles.* Lib. V. Cap. 1. quòd ante ipsum, in amphitheatro cum ludibrio circumductum, portata sit tabula, cui Latinis litteris inscriptum fuerit: *Hic est Attalus Christianus!*

under-

undergo such a series of sufferings? and shall we not for his sake and for the confession of his kingdom, suffer ourselves to be mocked and despised?

Fourthly, As God can so incline the hearts of his enemies as to make them subservient to his decrees, we, who are under the protection of Jesus Christ, ought to lay aside all fear of men.

What a remarkable proof was it of God's power in turning the human heart, that Pilate, almost like Caiaphas (*1*), should write the truth unknowingly and against his will; and that he should be, as it were, the first Apostle, in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in three different languages! This instance should be an assurance to believers, that all things shall work together for their good; and that even the devices and schemes of their enemies shall terminate in promoting the decrees of God. Who then will be terrified at the enterprizes of their enemies? who will be afraid of them, so as to be deterred from following Christ? They have no power of themselves to hurt us; they cannot do what they will; but, even against their will, must execute what God has appointed concerning his servants.

Fifthly, When the cause of Christ seems to be in the greatest danger, then God more eminently displays his glory.

(1) John xi. 51.

The enemies of Christ little expected, when he was once fastened on the cross, that they should ever hear of him again. But behold ! while Jesus was yet hanging on the cross, God begins to glorify his name by directing Pilate to say, ' What I have written, I have written.' Thus for the consolation of his oppressed people, God styles himself ' I am that I am (*m*). ' The case is still the same ; when, to men, things seem irretrievable, God shews himself in his incontrollable power, and draws a line and sets bounds to the desire of the wicked, saying, ' Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; here shall thy proud waves be staid (*n*). '

II.

We come, in the next place, briefly to consider the second remarkable circumstance which happened at the crucifixion ; namely, the dividing of our blessed Saviour's garments. The account of this circumstance presupposes, that Jesus was stripped of his garments before he was lifted up on the cross ; and as his body was lacerated with scourging, it must have occasioned a sensible pain. But neither the pain, nor the ignominy with which this indignity was attended, caused the Lamb of God to make any resistance. He quietly suffered his garments to be taken from him, that he might be a complete burnt-offering to the Divine justice.

(*m*) Exodus iii. 14.(*n*) Job xxxviii. 11.

As he came naked and helpless into the world, it pleased him also to go naked out of it. Thus our blessed Lord patiently submitted to this last reproach of being exposed naked before so many thousands; and likewise descended to the lowest step of poverty, being stripped of every thing that belonged to him. It may therefore well be said, 'that he became poor for our sake, that we through his poverty might be rich (o).'

The Lord Jesus having been thus fastened naked to the Cross; his clothes, according to the usage of the Romans, fell to the lot of the soldiers who had performed the execution. And as there were four of them concerned in crucifying our blessed Saviour, they now set about dividing his garments. These were of two kinds, namely, a large upper garment which came down to the feet, according to the custom of the Orientals; and under this, a close vest. Hence the Evangelists, particularly St. John who was present on Mount Golgotha, inform us how the soldiers proceeded in dividing each of these robes.

Of the upper garment they made four parts, to every soldier a part; so that this loose robe was cut into four pieces. Some commentators have observed, that such garments were made of four pieces sewed together, and therefore might be very conveniently divided into four parts. As for the close vest or coat, as it did

(o) 2 Cor. viii. 9.

not consist of several pieces sewed together, but was woven without any seam; they thought it best, instead of cutting it, to cast lots whose it should be. The Evangelists take notice of three particulars relating to this circumstance.

1. They observe, that by this division of our Saviour's garments that Scripture was fulfilled, in which David introduces the Messiah, making this complaint: 'They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.' This prophecy, which even the ancient Jewish Church understood of the Messiah, was now fulfilled; and this accomplishment of it is here mentioned by St. John, in order to guard the faithful against the offence of the Cross. If our Saviour's garments had been only divided, it might be said, that this was no more than David might very easily have conjectured; it being customary almost in every country, for the clothes of executed criminals to fall to the executioner's share. Therefore, as David probably knew by the Spirit, that the Messiah was to be crucified, he might naturally conclude that he must give up his garments to the executioners. And as the punishment of crucifixion was inflicted by more than one executioner, it might be supposed that his garments would be divided among them. But how could David, from mere conjecture, foretel that lots would be cast for the Messiah's vesture? This circumstance entirely depended on the free will of the Roman soldiers; and yet

yet the Holy Spirit caused it to be predicted many hundred years before ; that, by the accomplishment of it, we might be assured that these things had not fallen out fortuitously, and without any design. No one that lived in the time, when this prophecy was delivered in the Old Testament, could have thought that it would be fulfilled literally, and in the very order of the words as delivered by the Psalmist (*p*). But who could have less intention of fulfilling the Scripture than these soldiers, who did not so much as know that any such occurrence had been foretold by the Prophet? This is a miracle of Divine wisdom, in directing these circumstances in such a manner, that men unknowingly fulfil what he has determined ; and yet not by compulsion, but still retaining their full freedom. Therefore St. John, who was an eye witness of the whole transaction, breaks out into an exclamation of wonder, ‘ These things ‘ therefore the soldiers did ! ’ The pious Luther has a very remarkable passage * on this procedure of the Soldiers : “ It is my opinion, says “ that learned divine, that the Soldiers did not “ divide our Saviour’s garments for the sake of “ any profit or advantage, but merely by way “ of ridicule and jest ; as a token that all was “ over with Jesus, and that he was lost, destroyed, “ extinct, and utterly forgotten, as the basest and

(*p*) Psal. xxii. 18.

* In his explanation of the 22d Psalm, Tom. IV. p. 271. of the Leipzig edition.

“ most contemptible of men. Therefore they
“ not only deprived him of life, but would
“ not let his friends or relations have even his
“ clothes for a memorial of him ; These miscre-
“ ants neither expected that he would rise again,
“ nor were afraid that his death would be aveng-
“ ed by his heavenly Father.”

2. St. Matthew observes, that the soldiers, after they had divided his garments, sat by the Cross, and watched the Lord Jesus. This was done likewise according to the Roman custom ; for it was usual to set a soldier or two, and sometimes more, to watch such as were crucified, lest their relations should carry them off either living or dead, and decently inter them. This, in some measure, was also designed as a reflection on the followers of Christ, who were looked upon as a set of people that were for opposing the public execution of justice ; and upon this unjust supposition, the disciples were afterwards charged with having stolen away their Master's body out of the Sepulchre. Now, whether they had any thoughts that Jesus, by magical arts, would escape from the Cross ; or whether they apprehended that he would be rescued by the populace ; both these suspicions were extremely injurious to our blessed Saviour. Some are likewise of opinion, that a stronger guard than usual was appointed to watch our Saviour on the Cross, at the solicitation of the chief priests ; yet, by the Divine superintendency, this precaution served only to confirm,

confirm, before all the people, first the reality of his death, and afterwards of his resurrection.

3. St. Mark observes, that this division of Christ's garments was made about the third hour, *i. e.* in the third temple hour or great division of the day, which begun at noon, and ended at three in the afternoon: For the Jews divided both night as well as day into four quarters, each of which contained three common hours, as we have observed above *. If in this circumstance of our Saviour's passion, namely, the dividing of his garments, we consider the behaviour of the Roman soldiers, it must be owned, that they may put many Christians to the blush, who, in the division of inheritances, often break out into violent quarrels, and irreconcilable enmities, and engage in chargeable law-suits. This division, on the contrary, was carried on without the least dispute or wrangling; and such was the prudence and moderation of the parties, that they consented the whole coat should fall by lot to one of them, rather than be spoiled by cutting it asunder. Will not these Pagan soldiers rise in judgment at the last day, to the condemnation of those malignant Christians, who, rather than gratify their neighbour, will suffer a thing to be destroyed, or consume it among lawyers, rather than come to an amicable agreement with their relations. These soldiers are likewise an emblem of those who are satisfied, if they can only get food and rai-

* See vol. II. p. 364.

ment by their external profession of religion. Had these wretched men humbled themselves before Christ, acknowledged their sins, and desired to have been partakers of the forgiveness which he supplicated for them; they might have obtained from him a place in Paradise, as one of the malefactors on the Cross did, to his unspeakable happiness. But they, when they had got our Saviour's raiments cared for nothing further. They leave the blessed Jesus to bleed and die on the cross, while they are busied about dividing his garments. Herein they represent those earthly-minded nominal Christians, who, if they can but draw a good income from the world, little concern themselves about knowing Christ, and the power of his resurrection.

But let us now direct our eyes to the Lord Jesus, under these sufferings; for he has both atoned for several sins, and acquired grace for us by his behaviour on this occasion: He has both sanctified such sufferings of his faithful servants, and left them a pattern for their imitation.

He has first expiated the loss of the Divine Image, and that glorious innocence, bestowed on our first parents. Man was then pure from all inordinate desires and evil propensities, so that he was not ashamed of his natural nakedness; for he knew no sin, and consequently experienced no shame. This invaluable jewel we lost in Adam; at his fall we, as it were, immediately

mediately fell among thieves ; who stripped us naked, deprived our souls of this precious ornament, and placed us in such a condition that we may well be ashamed of our nakedness.

But secondly, he has likewise hereby obtained for us a garment to cover the nakedness of our souls ; which was prefigured by the coats of skins, which God made for our first parents, after their eyes became opened, so as to perceive that they were naked (*q*). Jesus Christ himself is, in Scripture, represented as a Garment, which we are to put on ; ‘ Put ye on the Lord ‘ Jesus (*r*). As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ (*s*).’ But on what account the sacred person of Jesus Christ is considered under the emblem of a Garment, we are informed by several other passages of Scripture ; for it speaks of a ‘ Garment of salvation, and a Robe of righteousness (*t*) :’ But the righteousness of Christ is nothing but his perfect obedience, by which he has fulfilled whatever the sinner was to have done, to acquire a right to eternal life ; and suffered all that the sinner was to have suffered, by making atonement to the Divine Justice for the offences committed against it. Now, as this righteousness is imputed by God to the penitent sinner, and accepted by him through faith ; so it may very properly be compared to a Garment, since it is of the same use to the

(*q*) Gen. iii. 21.

(*s*) Gal. iii. 27.

(*r*) Rom. xiii. 14.

(*t*) Isa. lxi. 10, &c.

soul, as a garment is to the body. For as a garment covers the nakedness of the body, preserves it from heat and cold, and both cherishes and adorns it. So likewise the righteousness of Jesus Christ covers the shameful nakedness of the soul (*u*). It protects the soul against the heat of the Divine wrath, and the howlings and gnashings of teeth of the damned; it warms and kindles in believers an ardent love and gratitude towards God, who, for their sake, has not spared his only begotten Son. Lastly, it is such a glorious ornament to the soul, that, in this dress, it need not be ashamed to make its appearance before the throne of God, and to have fellowship with the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. But as the human body can receive no benefit from a garment without putting it on; so must the righteousness of Jesus Christ be put on, before it can cover, protect, warm, and adorn the soul. Now it is put on, when the soul through faith and love becomes united with Christ Jesus, and by obeying his divine precepts, brings forth the fruit of good living; so that putting on the Lord Jesus, includes both our justification and sanctification.

In justification the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us at the Divine tribunal, and received by us through faith; so that God no longer looks on us as we are in ourselves, in our corrupt sinful nature, but as we are in Je-

(*u*) Pſal. xxxiii. 1. Revel. iii. 18.

fus Christ, the Son of his love, in whom his Soul is well pleased. In sanctification the Spirit of Christ also works in us an active righteousness, whereby that faith, by which we put on Christ as our garment, now produces in the soul all the fruits of the Spirit, and good works; and this is called in Scripture, 'putting on the new man (x); putting on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering (y).' Thus Christ obtained for us a splendid robe of salvation; so that by putting on the garment of our first-born Brother, we happily inherit the blessing. This garment is of the same nature with the coat of the Lord Jesus; because it is not to be divided, but must be put on entire. Christ is not only made our Righteousness, but likewise our Sanctification (z); and therefore they, who are for having only his righteousness as a covering for sin, but deny his sanctifying power and do not seek after holiness, as it were rend Christ's coat, and are worse than these Pagan soldiers.

Thirdly, our blessed Saviour has acquired for us a robe of glory; for, when the use of food and raiment shall be superseded, our glorified bodies shall be adorned with a heavenly effulgence. To this St. Paul alludes in these words: 'We have a desire to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven (a).'

(x) Eph. iv. 24.

(y) Col. iii. 12.

(z) Cor. i. 30.

(a) 2 Cor. v. 2.

Moreover,

126 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

Moreover, our dear Mediator, by these ignominious circumstances, has sanctified the similar sufferings of his children, and sweetened them with superabundant consolations.

1. He has sanctified their bodily nakedness ; especially in times of persecution, when they are deprived of all their goods, and are obliged to go about almost naked, and destitute of every thing (*b*).

2. He has sanctified the sufferings of Christians, when they are stripped by the executioner, stretched out on the rack, given up to the brutality of insolent wretches ; or when painful or inhuman outrages are committed on their dead bodies.

3. He has sanctified to his servants the spoiling of their goods for his sake, when they must see what of right belongs to them or their relations with-held from them, or taken away, by the unjust violence of strangers.

4. He has sanctified the state of our spiritual nakedness, when the soul is stripped of what it accounted its dearest property, its covering, ornament, and glory ; when it lies in extreme indigence, without comfort, strength, tranquillity, or joy ; and when all it has to support itself is a Word of the Divine promise.

Lastly, The Son of God, by this part of his sufferings, has left us an example, which we are to follow.

(*b*) Heb. xi. 37. 1 Cor. iv. 11.

1. He instructs us how ready we ought to be, to suffer ourselves, when God requires it, to be stripped of all temporal things.

2. He teaches us that we should likewise give our cloak or upper garment to those who would take our coat, rather than sin by revenging ourselves; and that we should rather suffer injustice than do an injury.

3. He enjoins us to part with some of our substance in covering others, and particularly in clothing his persecuted servants.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Faithful Saviour! we thank thee for all those salutary truths, which we have now learned from two particular circumstances attending thy passion. Praised be thy name, who by the title on thy cross hast given us to understand that, even in thy death, thou didst still remain our Jesus, our Saviour, and our King. Make us partakers of those blessings which thou hast procured for us by thy sufferings. May we be truly sensible of the shame of our spiritual nakedness. Grant that we may know the insufficiency of our own righteousness, and desire to be clothed by thy righteousness here; so that, after laying aside the garment of our flesh, we may be arrayed in the effulgent robe of heavenly glory hereafter. Amen.

C O N-

CONSIDERATION VI.

*The mental sufferings of JESUS CHRIST on
the Cross.*

‘ (a) **A**ND the people stood beholding;
 ‘ and they that passed by reviled him,
 ‘ wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou
 ‘ that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in
 ‘ three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son
 ‘ of God, come down from the cross. Like-
 ‘ wise also the chief Priests, mocking him
 ‘ with the Scribes and Elders, said, He saved
 ‘ others, himself he cannot save. If he be the
 ‘ Christ, the King of Israel, the chosen of God,
 ‘ let him save himself, and now come down
 ‘ from the cross, that we may see it, and
 ‘ we will believe him. He trusted in God; let
 ‘ him deliver him now, if he will have him;
 ‘ for he said, I am the Son of God. And the
 ‘ soldiers also mocked him, coming to him
 ‘ and offering him vinegar; and saying, If
 ‘ thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.
 ‘ The thieves also, who were crucified with
 ‘ him, cast the same in his teeth. And one of
 ‘ the malefactors, who were hanged, railed
 ‘ on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thy-
 ‘ self and us.’

(a) Matth. xxvii. 39—44. Mark xv. 29—32. Luke
xxxiii. 35, 36, 37, 39.

This

This part of the history of the passion exhibits to us the mental sufferings of our blessed Lord. Such outrageous indignities, as were offered Christ on the cross, may not improperly be called the crucifixion of his soul. For, if the nails that were driven through his hands and feet put him to the most sensible pain; the mockeries, insults, and invectives, which penetrated into his heart, and were levelled at him like poisonous and fiery-darts, must have occasioned the greater torture to his unspotted soul. David complains, that ‘as with a sword in his bones, his enemies reproach him, while they daily say unto him, Where is now thy God?’ It is beyond the comprehension of all human understanding what the Son of David felt in his soul, when he was, as it were, set up as a butt for reproaches, and when so many tongues, set on fire of hell, discharged their mockeries against him; which David compares to sharp arrows of the mighty (*b*). If St. Paul says of Apostates, that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (*c*), he may very justly be said to have been as it were crucified by those horrid blasphemies, revilings, and mockeries, which he heard on the cross.

In the preceding sufferings of Christ, all sorts of men had exercised their tongues in the most virulent manner, and yielded them up as tools to Satan, in order to give the most sensible wounds

(*b*) Ps. cxx. 4.

(*c*) Heb. vi. 6.

to the Son of God. The tongue of Judas had betrayed him, and pointed him out to his enemies by that hypocritical salutation, Hail Master! Peter's tongue had denied him with curses and imprecations. The tongues of the false witnesses had slandered him. The tongues of the High Priest Caiaphas, and of the other members of the Sanhedrim, had condemned him as a blasphemer; had falsely accused him before Pilate and Herod, and charged him with many enormous crimes. The tongues of the officers of the Council had ridiculed his prophetic office, and the tongues of the Roman soldiers his regal dignity. The tongue of Herod had insulted him by several impertinent and insolent questions. The tongue of Pilate had pronounced sentence on him, and ordered him to be scourged and put to death. The tongues of the whole Jewish people had cried, Crucify him! Crucify him! And now, when he was actually fastened on the cross, and the hands of his enemies were in a manner tired, their envenomed tongues were the more virulent in venting all manner of reproach and contumely against him. These, the spirit of darkness and lies filled with the venom of the infernal dragon; and by these he endeavoured to make his last attempt on the soul of our blessed Lord, who at present was to feel the wrath of God in the highest degree. We shall therefore make some remarks on these mockeries, by which the soul of our holy Redeemer was assaulted; and

and draw some inferences from them for our edification. For this end, we shall

First, Take notice of the authors of these taunting reflections against the blessed Jesus.

Secondly, The instruments with which they reviled and insulted him.

I.

As to the persons who reviled our blessed Saviour on the cross, four sorts of men were particularly concerned in the guilt; and these were

1. The people.
2. The Rulers of the Jews.
3. The Roman soldiers.
4. The malefactors who were crucified with him.

1. The Jewish people, or the multitude who stood about the cross of Christ, were guilty of this enormous sin. We have observed before, that our blessed Saviour was followed to the place of crucifixion by a great multitude of people; that they might entertain their eyes with this bloody spectacle. Hence it is probable, that not only Mount Golgotha, but all the adjacent eminences were covered with spectators; especially, as Jerusalem was then filled with an innumerable concourse of idle and curious people, on account of the Passover*. Then was seen in the great

* Josephus, in his history of the Jewish war, says, That at one Passover three millions of souls were assembled at Jerusalem. Book II. Chap. III.

Antitype, the accomplishment of what was typically done on the annual feast of atonement; for the whole congregation of the children of Israel stood round the High Priest, when he offered the sacrifice for the sins of the people. Thus the High Priest over the house of God, at the time when he offered himself on the cross to his heavenly Father, was surrounded by a vast multitude of people; who, according to the Divine decree, were to be witnesses of this general Sacrifice. Some of the people stood at a distance, and looked on; the curiosity of others led them to approach nearer to the cross, that they might have a more distinct view of Jesus; and these were the persons who reviled him. For as it was customary, in stoning an Israelite, for every one present to throw a stone at the malefactor; so here, likewise, none of the spectators of Christ's crucifixion, who stood near, omitted to throw a stone of invective against him.

2. The next who were involved in this guilt were the Rulers of the people; or, as they are specified by St. Matthew, the chief Priests, the Scribes, and the Elders (*d*). In some Greek copies, the Pharisees are likewise mentioned*, who, we may be sure, were not far off. Thus

(*d*) Chap. xxvii. 41.

* Tertiam verò partem manuscriptorum, Matth. xxvii. 41. loco πρεσβυτερων legere φαρισαίων, quod et quædam versiones agnoscunt, teste SAUBERTO, observat GERHARDUS VAN MASTRICHT in *Notis Criticis*, Testamento Wettsteniano Græco subjunctis, p. 7.

the civil and Ecclesiastical Chiefs of the Jewish nation were here present. These persons, on account of the approaching Passover, had, according to the Mosaic Law, affairs of a very different nature to attend. Besides, this polluted place of execution ill suited those pretended scrupulous consciences, which, but six hours before, would not permit these hypocrites to set a foot within a Pagan court of justice, lest they should be defiled. But an inhuman rancour against Jesus had brought them hither, along with the rabble. Nay, they were not only the nearest spectators at the time of the crucifixion, but remained at the cross for some time after ; which they did partly, that, by their presence, they might prevent any of the people from coming to succour Jesus, and take him from the cross ; and partly, that they might feast their savage eyes with this bloody sacrifice, and increase his sufferings with all kind of insults and blasphemies, after the soldiers had nailed his body to the cross. But God, without having any share in these wicked and detestable views, by his secret Providence detained them there ; that they might be witnesses of the sufferings of Christ on Mount Golgotha, and of the uncommon patience, mildness, and piety which he displayed, to the disgrace of his enemies, who had condemned him as a blasphemer. Moreover, the Elders of the people, by standing about the cross, may put us in mind of the Type of Christ, exhibited by the

134 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

rock which was struck in the presence of all the Elders of Israel (*e*), and of the builders, who would reject the Head-stone of the corner (*f*).

3. The Roman soldiers likewise shared in this guilt; for St. Luke (*g*) observes, that the soldiers also mocked him. In the Judgment-hall of Pilate, they had already committed several outrages against him, and vexed our Saviour's righteous soul by all manner of prophane and contumelious reflections. However, they were so far from having exhausted their stock of cruel mockeries, that they still made the crucified Jesus the object of their farther ridicule. We do not indeed find, that they were the first in their revilings at the place of crucifixion. It was the Jews and their Rulers who led the way, and thus by their wicked example, the Gentiles were incited to repeat their approbrious language and insults.

4. Lastly, The malefactors who were crucified with him were also guilty of this sin. For St. Matthew says, 'The thieves also, who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth;' from which words one would be apt to conclude, that both malefactors, who were on his right hand and on his left, concurred in reviling our blessed Saviour. But St. Luke expressly says, that one of the malefactors railed on him, but that he was rebuked by the other. Hence it is not improbable, that the other also

(*e*) Exod. xvii. 6. (*f*) Ps. cxviii. 32. (*g*) Luke xxiii. 36.

reviled

reviled him at first; but soon after entertained better thoughts of Jesus, reproved his companion, and immediately became a convert to our blessed Lord *. This seeming inconsistency may also be solved in the following manner. The Evangelists, intending to relate the horrid mockeries, which the Lord of Glory suffered from all ranks of people while he hung on the cross, first mention the revilings of the people. They observe, in the next place, how the Rulers and Elders reviled him, and how the spirit of mockery was by their means also stirred up in the Roman soldiers. Lastly, they add, that he was also reviled and insulted even by the robbers and murderers, who were crucified with him. Thus, it is usual to speak sometimes, as if a thing was done by many, when perhaps the fact was done only by one person of a certain rank or age. For instance; if a harmless old man happens to be abused in the public streets by a petulant boy, it is not improper to say, this poor man in his old age is the sport of children; though only one single boy had insulted him. Thus also St. Matthew and St. Mark might very well say, that Jesus was reviled even by murderers and robbers; though, according to St. Luke's account, only one of the malefactors behaved in such a wicked manner. From this circumstance of our Saviour's passion, we shall deduce the following truths.

* Sic AMBROSIUS in *Luc.* xxiii. Fortasse et alter prius convitatus est, sed repente conversus.

First, Jesus Christ has suffered himself to be mocked and abused by all ranks of men, that he might deliver all from the spirit of mockery and abuse.

It is a terrible consideration to think, that all sorts of spectators sharpened their tongues, and pointed them with bitter invectives against the ever-glorious Son of God. He was mocked by Jews and Gentiles, by young and old, by the learned and ignorant, by teachers and hearers, by the clergy and magistrates, by private men and soldiers. Thus all the waves and floods of abuse went over the soul of our blessed Lord with combined violence. But it may here be asked, what could move the Divine Wisdom to permit so many scoffers to assault our blessed Saviour with their envenomed tongues? It was

1. To shew in this mirrour that corrupt inclination of making a mock of the distressed and afflicted, and of ridiculing the most sacred persons and things, which has by the Fall generally infected the human heart, and prevails in every rank, age, and sex. What St. Paul says of carnal men, namely, that 'the poison of asps is under their lips (g),' displays itself particularly in the abominable mockeries and invectives, which were poured forth by the engines of Satan against our blessed Lord. But

(g) Rom. iii. 13.

2. The

2. The Son of God intended, by patiently submitting to these keen arrows of reproach and mockery, to procure forgiveness of such grievous sins to those who commit them whether they be Jews or Gentiles; so that every one who is guilty, and penitently acknowledges these heinous sins, heartily bewailing, and sincerely abhorring them, may find remission of them by the merits and intercession of Christ.

3 He has hereby delivered from the bonds and fetters of the spirit of mockery all those, who are but willing to be released, and apply to him for succour with a firm resolution of amendment.

Secondly, The same sins may be committed by different persons; and yet the guilt may be greater in some than in others.

Here both Jews and Gentiles reviled and mocked our blessed Saviour; but it is certain, that the Jews sinned much more grievously than the Gentiles; since they mocked that Jesus, whom they might have known to be the Messiah and the Son of God from the writings of the Prophets. Besides, our blessed Lord had hitherto conversed with, and lived among them, and done many surprising miracles to the souls and bodies of their countrymen. They were likewise obliged, as the peculiar people of God, to set a better example to the uncircumcised Gentiles. Nay, we find that the chief Priests also mocked him, together with the people; but it is evident that the former
were

were guilty of a greater crime than the latter. For Christ had before reproved them (*b*) for their wicked derisions. Besides, they pretended to have the key of knowledge, and, from the prophetic writings, consequently ought to have been better informed concerning the Messiah's state of humiliation. On the contrary, they should have reproved the scoffing multitude, and with-held them from increasing the sorrows of the afflicted; instead of beginning the railing and mockery, and inciting the people to scoff and inveigh against Christ by their ill example.

Thirdly, Punishment in itself makes no criminal better without the concurrence of Divine grace.

An instance of this is here seen in one of the robbers, who, notwithstanding all his pains, joined with those who mocked the blessed Jesus; and as his hands were bound, so that he could not lay hold on the sacred person of Christ, he made his tongue, as it were, the bow to discharge the envenomed arrows of abuse and mockery against him. Could the punishment inflicted by the law produce amendment, this malefactor would have been converted as well as the other. But a contrary effect not only happened in the instance before us, but may be observed every day. Neither the sword, the gallows, nor the wheel have the power of converting a criminal, unless grace interposes to change and mollify the

(*b*) Luke xvi. 14, 15.

heart.

heart. Nay, it is often seen that profligate sinners are rather hardened than reformed, not only by temporal punishments, but even by Divine chastisements. Such is the corruption of human nature! so deeply rooted in man is the love of, and propensity to, sin! O that there may be none who read these pages, to whom this complaint of the Prophet may be applied: 'Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return (i).'

II.

We come, in the next place, to consider the instruments which occasioned our blessed Lord's mental sufferings on the cross. These were

1. Bold and insulting looks.
2. Deriding gestures.
3. Abusive words.

1. Bold and audacious looks darted from the eyes of the people; for St. Luke says, 'The people stood beholding, and the Rulers also with them derided him, &c.' Probably this melancholy spectacle was an entertainment to many of them; and their insolent eyes, which ought to have wept blood on account of the pain and tortures which the Lord of Glory endured, sparkled with a malignant joy at his

(i) Jer. v. 3.

bitter pains. It is usual for the people generally to express a concern for malefactors under sentence of death, since they partake the same nature. And this sympathetic concern and pity is the greater, when they see a man languishing in the extreme tortures of a lingering death. But there was not the least traces of any such humane concern to be found in the enemies of Christ. How must his generous soul have been affected with the rudeness, insolence, and cruelty, which appeared in the looks of so many thousands of inhuman spectators! Of this the Messiah had long before complained by the mouth of David (*k*) in these words: 'They stand staring and looking upon me: They opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha! Aha (*l*)!' But these looks were aggravated

2. By the deriding gestures of the people who passed by: For St. Matthew and St. Mark observe, 'that they who passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.' This gesture, among the Jews and other Eastern nations, was expressive of the utmost contempt. In the second book of Kings it is said (*m*), 'The virgin, the daughter of Sion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken the head at thee. From several other passages of Scripture * it appears, that the shaking of the head

(*k*) Psalm xx. 17. (*l*) Psalm xxxv. 21. (*m*) Chap. xix. 21.

* See Job xvi. 4. Ps. xlv. 14. Lament. ii. 15.

was used as a mark of the greatest contempt. But it is remarkable, that it was foretold that the crucified Messiah would experience this kind of mockery: For he is represented in the Psalms making this complaint: 'All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, and shake the head (n). I became also a reproach unto them; when they looked upon me, they shook their heads (o).' St. Luke says of the Rulers of the people, that they also derided him (p), which word in the original * properly signifies, by turning up the nose, to express a look of disdain and derision. The soldiers also, by way of mockery, came unto him, and offered him vinegar or sour wine, instead of a cordial to support his spirits which were now quite exhausted. Probably these were not all the deriding gestures which the Son of God beheld, but are set down only as specimens of the malice and barbarity of his enemies. How must this express Image of the Deity have grieved to see the odious disguise of Satan in the attitudes, grimaces, and gestures of these his slaves! That it was very painful to his soul may be sufficiently inferred from the bitter complaints, ascribed to

(n) Psalm xxii. 7.

(o) Psalm cix. 25.

(p) Luke xxiii. 35.

* ἐξερμυκτηρίζον, Conf. LXX. Ps. xxii. 7. et Luc. xvi. 14. ἀ μυντηγ nasus: unde ἐρμυκτηρίζειν i. e. suspenso naso aliquem subfannare, vel corrugatis naribus indicem digitum crebrâ motione in aliquem dirigere.

the Messiah in the book of Psalms, on account of this scurrilous wickedness of his enemies. To these insulting looks and deriding gestures were likewise added

3. Abusive words and invectives; some of which, the three Evangelists St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, have specified. St. Luke concludes his account of the mockeries and insulting speeches made against Christ in Caiaphas's house, with these words: 'And many other things blasphemously spake they against him (q).' Hence we may conclude that this specimen of the abusive words, which our blessed Saviour was obliged to hear on the cross, were but a part of the invectives poured out against him. Now all these opprobrious words are to be looked on as so many envenomed arrows, discharged against the heart of the blessed Jesus by the prince of darkness, by means of the tongues of these scoffers. His soul, indeed, was not in the least polluted by them, but it was extremely wounded and tortured. In these opprobrious words, they

First, Derided his truth and omnipotence, saying, 'Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days; save thyself and come down from the cross! The preceding night, when Jesus stood before the Sanhedrim, the Jews had very much abused these words of our blessed Lord, and scandalously perverted them by the tongues of their false wit-

(q) Luke xxii. 65.

nesses.

nesses *. Here they are again cast in his teeth ; and it is not improbable that those very false witnesses, who had slanderously perverted these innocent words of Jesus, here began again to reproach him with the same words ; which were immediately caught by others among the multitude, who seconded those perjured scoffers in their revilings. By this, their intention was to expose our blessed Lord as a chimerical boaster, and one who pretended to perform great things, when, at the same time, he was not able to make good his mighty pretensions. Thus they impiously perverted his words, and ridiculed his omnipotence. Thus the Eternal Truth submitted to pass for a liar, and the Power of the Most High was accounted a vain, impotent man.

Secondly, They derided the honour of the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. ‘ They who ‘ passed by——said, If thou be the Son of God, ‘ come down from the Cross.’ But in this the chief Priests and Elders had already set them a pattern by saying, ‘ If he be Christ, the ‘ chosen of God, let him come down from the ‘ Cross ;—for he said, I am the Son of God.’ Thus as our blessed Saviour had twice confessed before the sanhedrim, that he was the Son of God ; so was he twice mocked and ridiculed for it on the Cross ; namely, by the people, and by their teachers. Satan had formerly be-

* See vol. II. Consideration VII. of our Saviour’s sufferings before the Spiritual court, or Jewish sanhedrim.

gun his temptation with this article, saying, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down (r).' Here the instruments of satan say, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' From the resemblance betwixt these words, it is manifest, that satan himself vented them here by his engines, and thus challenged the Son of God, to come down from the Cross, and attest the truth of his eternal Sonship by a miracle. That very action would, on the contrary, have proved him not to be the obedient Son of the heavenly Father. For by coming down alive from the Cross, on which he was to die, he would have disobeyed his Father; who required from him obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross.

Thirdly, These miscreants ridiculed the Divine miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, by which he had sealed his doctrines, and relieved such multitudes of unhappy persons. For the rulers of the people, by saying, 'He has saved others, himself he cannot save,' intended to render the truth of all his former miracles suspected, and to represent them as mere juggle or magical performances. This was the inference they drew, that if his miracles proceeded from God, he would be able to help himself as well as others; but it was plain he could not help himself, and therefore his miracles did not proceed from God. As if they had said to the

(r) Matth. iv. 6.

people,

people, who doubtless crowded about these eminent persons, “ See what a pretended
“ worker of miracles Jesus is, who was follow-
“ ed by thousands: He has helped others;
“ but now he cannot help himself in this ex-
“ tremity. Does not this plainly shew that he
“ is a cheat, who absolutely imposed on your
“ senses by sham miracles?” But it is very re-
markable, that our blessed Lord in the very
first year of his ministry had foretold, that he
should one day be thus insulted: ‘ Ye will sure-
ly say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal
thyself (s).’ This prophecy of the Lord
Jesus was here fulfilled by his enemies; so
that the sting of this offence is taken away.
Thus our blessed Saviour, did not want
power to help himself, and yet did not exert
that power, that he might help us; and con-
sequently he preferred our deliverance to his own.

Fourthly, Our blessed Lord’s confidence in
his heavenly Father was here ridiculed. ‘ He
trusted in God, say the rulers of the people,
let him deliver him now, if he will have him,’*
i. e. if God has pleasure in him, and acknow-
ledges him for his Son; ‘ For he said, I am the
Son of God.’ They recollected that Christ, in
his divine discourses, had often expressed a sin-
gular confidence in his heavenly Father, and
declared that he loved him (t); that he fought

(s) Luke iv. 23.

* εἰ θελεῖ αὐτόν, i. e. si amat eum, ut filium.

(t) John iii. 35. viii. 16, 29, 50, 54. xvi. 32, &c.

and promoted his honour ; that he did not leave him alone ; that he was with him, and assisted him, &c. From such expressions these malignant spiders suck the poison of calumny ; and thus endeavour to overthrow our Saviour's confidence in his Father, and as it were to cut away the anchor, by which the bark of his hope was still secured, though quite covered with outrageous waves, and tossed in the most dreadful tempest. It is further remarkable, that almost the very words used by these scoffers are found in the Psalms, where the Messiah is represented complaining, that his enemies say of him, ' He trusted in the Lord that he would ' deliver him ; let him deliver him, if he delight ' in him (*u*). ' Thus they unknowingly fulfilled the Scripture by this impious speech.

Fifthly, They here ridiculed the kingly dignity of Jesus Christ. For the chief Priests and Elders said, ' Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that we may see ' and believe.' The Roman soldiers followed their impious example, and said, ' If thou be ' the King of the Jews, save thyself.' If thou intendedst by thy military prowess to deliver the Jews from the dominion of the Romans, deliver thyself first, and thus give a proof of thy great power. Our blessed Saviour had acknowledged himself to be the King of Israel before Pilate ; and upon this account Pilate, in the title on the Cross, stiled him, JESUS

(*u*) Psal. xxii. 8.

OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS. Now as it was out of the power of the chief Priests to erase the superscription, which was a great offence to them, and as they could not prevail on Pilate to alter it; this put them on ridiculing it, by saying, If he be the King of Israel, as he is stiled in the superscription over his head, written in three languages, let him prove it by coming down from the Cross. To this they added, by way of derision, a promise that then they would believe on him; though at the same time nothing was farther from their thoughts. And, indeed, if Christ, in order to induce them to believe on him, had actually descended from the Cross, they would in all probability have imputed this miracle likewise to sorcery.

Sixthly and lastly, Our blessed Lord's office of Messiah was ridiculed by these miscreants; the chief Priests cried out, 'Let him save himself, if he be the Christ, or Messiah.' One of the crucified malefactors took this from their abusive mouths, and railed on him, saying, 'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.' As if he had said, As thou didst pretend to be the Messiah, help thyself and us; for if thou wilt come down from the Cross, surely thou wilt not leave us thy fellow-sufferers behind. Thus whatever was venerable, great, and glorious in the person of the Lord Jesus was here the subject of the most scurrilous reflections of profane scoffers. His Omnipotence, his e-

ternal Sonship, his Divinity, his divine miracles, his confidence in his heavenly Father, his regal dignity, and his office of Messiah, were all exposed to ridicule and mockery. We shall conclude this consideration by deducing the following truths from what has been said on this subject.

I. The opprobrious words, by which the blessed Jesus was insulted, are to be accounted among satan's severe temptations.

When satan, at the beginning of our Saviour's ministry, had been repulsed by our Lord, it is said, 'he departed from him for a season (x).' Now, at the close of his life, he returns to the charge, and enters into these his engines, as he anciently did into Goliath, to prompt them to blaspheme the God of Israel. His design was, by these abusive and deriding words, to try whether he could throw our blessed Lord's temper into some disorder, and move him to a passionate impatience; or whether he could excite in him a desire of giving a proof of his omnipotence, by coming down from the Cross; by which means the whole counsel of God, concerning our salvation, would have been frustrated, and the work of redemption would have miscarried. But as the Son of God remained faithful in the first trial, which he underwent immediately after his baptism; so he shewed the same firmness in this last encounter on the Cross. But the great Captain of our salvation submitted to this

(x) Luke iv. 13.

trial,

trial, that he might triumph over satan, notwithstanding his utmost efforts and severest outrages ; that he might bruise his head, extract the venomous sting of his temptations ; and obtain for us strength to remain firm in all trials, and to come off more than conquerors.

2. When the faithful servants of God are under outward sufferings, satan and his engines are most busy to vex their minds with opprobrious words, and insolent challenges.

Thus, no sooner was the Son of God nailed to the Cross, than his soul was assaulted by the revilings of his enemies. This is the way satan and his engines frequently proceed with Christ's members. When they are, as it were, externally hanging on the Cross ; when all the waves of affliction and persecutions are running over them ; then the tongues of their persecutors discharge their poisonous arrows of calumny at them. But great will be the reward of those, who in this particular are made like unto Christ, the first-born among many brethren. They must, after his great example, keep silence, and amidst all the rage and calumny of the world, possess their souls in patience ; and at last all will end in conquest and triumph.

3. The abuses, which the world pours forth against Christ and his members, will give less offence when the foul springs of them are laid open.

These scoffs and mockeries in some men proceed from mere levity, as it is here said of some,

that they reviled Jesus as they passed by. Thus many hastily pass by the Cross of Christ and the sufferings of his members, like a rapid stream, and immediately turn their thoughts from them. But such transient looks produce only a hasty judgment, evil imaginations, and blasphemous motions; from all which he is secure, who endeavours to possess his mind in peace and tranquility. In others such invectives are dictated by envy and hatred, as Jacob's sons envied Joseph for his father's particular love to him, and mocked him as a dreamer (y). Thus the chief Priests and Scribes were offended at Jesus; because he said he was the Son of God, and frequently mentioned the singular love that his heavenly Father bore towards him. This envious disposition had before prompted them to take up stones to cast at him (z); and the same malignant passion now moved their tongues to eject these deriding sarcasms. Others again have so accustomed themselves to opprobrious language, that it is become a second nature to them: and this might well be said of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose tongues were so possessed by the spirit of calumny, that they were quite incapable of passing any judgment upon Jesus that was consistent with truth or charity. Some men indeed revile out of complaisance to others, as the people and the soldiers did, in the instance before us; and others are prompted

(y) Gen. xxxvii. 4, 19. Acts vii. 9.

(z) John viii. 59.

to it by despair, as one of the malefactors, who were crucified with our blessed Saviour, was. Now who will mind the abuses of the world, or take offence at them, since the cause of them is not in the reviled servants of God, but in the revilers themselves, and the wicked dispositions of their minds? For these wretched slaves of satan are like the waves of a troubled sea, foaming up their own disgrace.

T H E P R A Y E R.

NOW we thank thee, O dear Redeemer, who hast not only suffered thy body to be crucified, but wast also so wounded and vexed in thy soul, by envenomed arrows from so many abusive tongues, that thou mightest heal us in body and soul. Let this part of thy sufferings work in us a serious abhorrence of all deriding words, looks, and jestures; and grant that we may patiently suffer all the waves of undeserved abuses to pass over us with united violence; and that in all sufferings we may remain faithful, and willingly submit to be reproached with thee, that we also may be made partakers of thy glory. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VII.

The gifts conferred by the LORD JESUS, while he hung on the Cross.

‘ (a) **B**UT the other malefactor answering,
 ‘ rebuked him [who railed on Jesus]
 ‘ saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou
 ‘ art in the same condemnation? And we in-
 ‘ deed justly: For we receive the due reward
 ‘ of our deeds; but this man hath done no-
 ‘ thing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord,
 ‘ remember me when thou comest into thy
 ‘ kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily,
 ‘ I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with
 ‘ me in Paradise. Now there stood by the
 ‘ Cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother’s
 ‘ sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary
 ‘ Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his
 ‘ mother, and the disciple standing by whom
 ‘ he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman,
 ‘ behold thy Son! Then saith he to the dis-
 ‘ ciple, Behold thy mother! And from that
 ‘ hour this disciple took her unto his own home.’

The blessed Jesus was fastened to the Cross quite naked, and stripped of every thing; his very clothes, which had till then been his only property, being taken from him by the soldiers. Nevertheless we may observe, how in this state of extreme poverty and abasement he distribut-

(a) Luke xxiii. 39—43. John xix. 25—27.

ed such noble gifts, as none of the rich and powerful of this world can bestow. For,

First, On a believing and penitent sinner he bestows the happiness of Paradise.

Secondly, To his disconsolate mother he gives a faithful Son.

Thirdly, To John, his beloved disciple, he gives a tender affectionate mother.

I.

The crucified Jesus confers Paradise on a penitent and believing sinner. Here we are to consider,

1. The person who obtained this transcendent gift.

2. The gift itself.

The person who obtained this favour is described according to his former and present condition.

According to his former course of life, he was a robber and murderer. Thus he had flagrantly transgressed the sixth and eighth Commandments of the supreme Legislator. It is probable that he was born and educated in the Jewish Church; for, if he had been a Gentile, he would have known nothing of the kingdom of the Messiah, or of Paradise. But, as the Jewish Church was then extremely corrupted, and the land of Judea was over-run with a set of seditious banditti, who were for shaking off the Roman yoke, and at the same time gave themselves up to live by rapine and plunder, so
that

that the roads were very unsafe for travellers; this man had probably belonged to one of these profligate gangs. Whether he had followed this course of life many years, or whether, after he had been concerned only in one or two enterprizes of this nature, the Roman soldiers had taken him prisoner in the fact, is uncertain; for there is nothing further said of his former circumstances. But it is not altogether improbable, that before he fell in company with such a lawless crew, he might have mixed with the multitudes, and have heard the discourses of our blessed Lord, and seen him perform many miracles; or at least he might have heard many wonderful things of Jesus of Nazareth from others. And though his strong propensity to wickedness had, for the present, suppressed all the good motions they might have caused in him; yet afterwards, amidst the leisure and reflections of his confinement in prison, they may have worked on his heart. For a grain of the Divine Word frequently falls on a savage, uncultivated soil; so that it produces no fruit till many years after, when sufferings and afflictions causes it to spring up.

As to this malefactor's present state, while he hung on the cross, it was indeed outwardly very wretched; for he was in great tortures, and dying the most cruel ignominious death: but inwardly, his heart was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who was producing in him repentance

pentance and faith, and made use of his tongue as the instrument to glorify the crucified Jesus, in the extremity of his sufferings and reproach.

Of this malefactor's repentance, indeed, the Evangelists give no express account; but it is sufficiently apparent from his reproof to his fellow-sufferer. For that shews,

First, An abhorrence and hatred against sin; which prompted him to check his companion for his cruel abuse of the crucified Jesus. For by his reproof, he signified that he inwardly detested sin; since no man would be thus so zealous in rebuking the sin of another, who did not seriously hate and repent of his own sins. Thus a holy zeal, and indignation against wickedness, is numbered amongst the effects of godly sorrow by the Apostle (*b*).

Secondly, It shewed a devout fear of God; for he says to his companion, 'Dost not THOU fear God?' Now this man would never have upbraided another for not fearing God, if his own heart had been void of that godly fear. Would not his own conscience have called out to him much louder than he did to his comrade, Dost not thou thyself fear God? Had his delight been still in wickedness, the fear of God would not have been before his eyes (*c*). But having now a deep sense of the abomination of sin, his mind was likewise deeply impressed with the majesty, holiness, and justice of God. As he was displeased because the other sinned in revil-

(*b*) 2 Cor. vii. 11.

(*c*) Ps. xxxvi. 1. Rom. iii. 18.

ing Christ; so he was highly displeased that he should shew so little fear and reverence for the living God, the Judge of all flesh.

Thirdly, His discourse to his comrade shews likewise a desire of reforming his neighbour, and bringing him from his error into a better way. He thinks it strange that his abandoned companion could revile Jesus, when he himself was in the same condemnation; being both sentenced by the civil power, to suffer the same ignominious death. He did not wonder that the spectators who stood beneath about the cross should revile our Lord; but he thought it very amazing and horrible, that a wretch who was nailed to the cross, and within a few hours of giving up the ghost, should think of sharpening his envenomed tongue against Jesus. He therefore rebukes this hardened railer; and would fain bring him to a better way of thinking, by impressing on his mind the fear of God, and of the rigour of his just judgment, which was now poured upon him. Now to endeavour to gain others, and bring them into the right way, is a sign of a penitent mind; as appears from the penitent Psalmist, who says, 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee (*d*).' In these words of the malefactor appears,

Fourthly, A vindication of the Divine justice: For he adds, 'And we indeed justly:' That we hang betwixt heaven and earth as a curse, and

(*d*) Ps. li. 13.

abomination is no injustice done to us. Though the sentence is hard, and the death painful; yet is it no more than we by our crimes have deserved. He vindicates not only the justice of the civil magistrate, who inflicted this punishment; but likewise the justice of God, whose Minister and Avenger the Sovereign is, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil (*e*).

Lastly, These words of the malefactor to his companion contain,

Fifthly, An open confession of the crimes he had committed: 'For we receive the due reward of our deeds.' Here indeed he does not particularly specify the several crimes he had been guilty of, but speaks of them in general terms, without palliating his offences, without complaining that there is no proportion betwixt his punishment and his crime, and without throwing any blame on others for seducing him; however owns himself a notorious criminal, pleads guilty, and confesses that he well deserved this punishment, which he therefore bears with patience and resignation.

These were the five unexceptionable proofs of the genuineness and sincerity of this man's repentance. But his faith, which the Holy Ghost at the same time kindled in his heart, was likewise manifested by the following signs.

1. By vindicating our blessed Lord; for he not only reproves the blasphemies of his wicked fellow-sufferer, but gives a public testimony of

(*e*) Rom. xiii. 4.

158 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

the perfect innocence of Jesus, in these words: 'But this Man hath done nothing amiss.' As if he had said, He is not only innocent of the faults which are laid to his charge; but in his whole life, has done nothing amiss*, nor so much as committed any indiscretion which deserves even a verbal chastisement, much less such a dreadful punishment as crucifixion. Thus he looks on our blessed Saviour as a holy, innocent, and undefiled person, and infinitely separated from all sinners. Nay, he was not only a witness, but pleaded in behalf of our Saviour's innocence; and that in the presence of so many great, powerful, and respected slanderers and blasphemers, whom he here publicly contradicts by confuting their calumnies.

2. He manifests his faith by a confidential address to our blessed Saviour; to whom he not only turns his face, but likewise his heart, and says, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' Hitherto he had spoke only to his wicked companion, and by reproving him, endeavoured to bring him to thoughts of repentance. But now, he turns from him and the rest of the spectators, and full of faith and reverence addresses himself to Jesus, against whom innumerable tongues were discharging their rancour in opprobrious revilings. Probably, what first touched the heart

* ἵδεν αὐτοπον ἐπραξε, quam phrasin lxx. interpretes de Deo adhibent. Job. xxxv. 13. ubi verba, אֵל לֹא יִרְשָׁע reddunt; ὁ κυριος αὐτοπα οὐ ποιεῖ.

of this man was the prayer of Christ, when nailed to the cross ; wherein he interceded for his enemies, saying, ‘ Father, forgive them ; ‘ for they know not what they do.’ These pathetic words kindled in his soul a spark of faith, love, and confidence towards the Lord Jesus, which declared itself in this humble request. Lord, remember me when thou comest ‘ into thy kingdom.’

3. He manifests his faith by an acknowledgement of the regal dignity and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Though Christ was in his lowest abasement, he not only calls him Lord, but also ascribes to him a kingdom ; and such a kingdom as he was to enter upon, and possess after his death. He confides in him who had not a garment to cover his nakedness ; in him, who had been even condemned to the ignominious death of the cross, as a King who had a real kingdom, in which he was to triumph and reign to all eternity. By this request, the penitent malefactor contradicts all those who hitherto had ridiculed the kingdom of Christ ; and glorifies the blessed Jesus at a time when his disciples were silent, and so confounded with fear, that they did not dare to acknowledge him for the King of Israel. Could he have done this, unless his mouth had been opened by the Spirit of faith, without which ‘ no man can say, ‘ that JESUS is the LORD (*f*)?’ The same blessed Spirit enabled him to believe in his heart,

(*f*) 1 Cor. xii. 3.

and

and confess with his mouth, that Jesus is the Lord (g). He further manifests his faith

4. By desiring a favour of the Lord Jesus, and recommending himself to his gracious remembrance. 'Lord Remember me;' which words express his concern for his immortal soul, that was now to be separated very soon from his body by a violent death. He does not pray to be delivered from the cross, but for the salvation of his soul. Lastly, he manifests his faith

5. By an humble resignation and poverty of spirit. He does not pray for any high station or post of honour in the kingdom of Christ; but only for his affectionate and favourable remembrance of him. He refers the rest to the love and wisdom of this spiritual King. Thus he was a signal instance, how soon the Spirit of Grace can accomplish its work, and bring it to maturity, in a soul that does not resist its sacred influence. Such instances also occur in the Acts of the Apostles; particularly in the Jaylor, who the very night he was going to lay violent hands on himself and commit suicide, was, with his whole family, brought to believe on the Lord Jesus.

What this gift was, which the crucified Jesus conferred on this person, we may learn from the following words: 'Verily, I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' Thus the gift bestowed on the con-

(g) Rom. x. 9.

verted

verted malefactor was nothing less than Paradise, that is, the desirable state to which the souls of the Blessed or the spirits of just men made perfect, after their separation from the body, are admitted in the presence of God, together with all the heavenly solace appertaining to that happy state. This timorous humble sinner would not presume to pray, that the Lord Jesus would receive him into his kingdom; but only requested that he would be pleased to remember him, when he should one day take possession of his kingdom, and enter into his glory. But the Son of God immediately answers his request with the greatest kindness, and promises him that, on that very day, he should be with him in his kingdom; to which he gives the name of Paradise, in order to shew that he is the King not of an earthly, but of an heavenly and unperishable Kingdom. Our blessed Lord by this answer likewise shews, that he is to be looked upon as the second Adam, who now by his actions and sufferings repaired the ruins caused by the transgression of the first Adam; and that he was to open again that Paradise, which our first Parent had shut against himself, and all his unfortunate descendants. But as he now opens Paradise to this penitent sinner, he at the same time forgives him all his sins, by which he had deserved the punishment of hell; and includes him in the general pardon which, in his prayer on the cross, he had supplicated for sinners: nay, he presents him to his heavenly

Father, as the first spoils which he had wrested on his cross from the hands of the devil. But that this terrified and trembling sinner, who was snatched as a brand out of the fire, might be the better assured of the accomplishment of the promise made him, he gives him his royal word: 'Verily, I say unto thee;' confirming his promise with his usual affirmative of Verily, or Amen. In his ministerial office, he used this affirmation as a true Prophet; but now he uses it as a true King, in whose words all his faithful subjects might safely confide. This whole narrative is a pleasing mirror, in which we may behold many comfortable and salutary truths.

1. It is a mirror of the power of faith, working by repentance. Here it may be seen how faith alters a man; how it kindles a new light in his understanding; and clears the eyes of the mind, so as to penetrate through all the clouds of reproach into the glory of Jesus Christ, and through all obstacles into his benevolent heart; to make his way through all offences; to own Christ, even in his lowest abasement, to be the Almighty Prince of life, and King of Glory; and, contrary to all outward appearance, to account his Word true, and worthy of all acceptance. Here we may also see how it works in the penitent a hatred and abhorrence of sin, a desire after Christ, charity to his neighbour in endeavouring to gain him over, and an humble resignation. Lastly, we may here see
how

how it extends its government over the tongue ; so that the sinner publickly acknowledges his own guilt, God's mercy, and the innocence of Christ. It is not, however, to be denied, that in this converted malefactor something extraordinary was done ; and that the spirit of faith in a short time completed in this man, as he had but a few hours more to live, what in the ordinary course of things it does slowly and gradually.

Come, all ye who boast of your faith in Christ, and place yourselves before this mirror of faith. Compare your faith with his faith, which manifested itself by so many precious fruits of the Spirit. Alas ! how much cause will you find to be ashamed at the very great disparity, which will appear on the comparison. You have for so long a time heard the word of faith, and have had a thousand opportunities which this poor malefactor had not ; yet how far does he surpass you in the power of faith ! How many of you, notwithstanding all your boasted faith, are still by your practices in unbelief. Your understanding is full of darkness, your will is swayed by the love of sin, is full of hatred to God, full of abhorrence to Christ and his reproach ; and lastly, you give up your tongues to the evil Spirit, by uttering all manner of injurious and opprobrious words. Lift up your eyes to Christ Jesus, who is now no longer on the cross, but on the throne of glory ; dealing out gifts, and impart-

ing the spirit of faith to those who pray for it. Implore him to implant in your hearts this exalted and living power of faith, of which you here see a pattern ; and let that faith work in you, and be productive of every virtue.

2 In this mirrour, the transcendent love which Christ bears to mankind is conspicuously displayed. Behold, how willing he is to receive the most wretched sinners who sincerely turn to him ; who forget all those vices in which they hitherto sought their Paradise ; who hunger after his grace, and desire nothing more than that he would think of them. How readily does he here hold out his hand, to rescue this sinner from destruction ! No sooner does this malefactor turn to the Prince of Life, than he is not only discharged from the sentence of eternal death, but declared a denizen of Paradise !

Alas, trembling sinner ! how canst thou hesitate a moment to give up thy heart to thy benign Saviour, who has appointed the felicities of Paradise for those who truly turn to him ? Dost thou doubt whether he will receive thee, or reject thee ? Behold, in the instance before us, his uncommon willingness to fulfil the desire of the most wretched, but penitent, sinner. Do not wilfully defer thy conversion to the last moment of thy life. Think not, because this malefactor did not turn to Christ but a few hours before his death, that thou mayest safely follow his example, and put off thy repentance
till

till thou art laid on the bed of death. Remember, that this is the only instance in the whole Scriptures of the acceptance of such a late repentance. How absurd then would it be to ground thy hope on so extraordinary an instance? Suppose it had once happened, that a person had leaped down from a high precipice without losing his life, Would it be prudent to run the risk, and leap down after him? No less unwise, are they who make a handle of this comfortable example for falling presumptuously into sin, and put off their repentance till the hour of death. Too many by such an infatuation exclude themselves from heaven. Alas, to sin is in our power; but when we are once fallen, to abstain from sin, to repent and be converted, is beyond the natural power of man; it is the goodness of God that must lead us to repentance. Now if sinners have been deaf to the kind admonitions and chastisements of God, he will also be deaf to their cries in their dying moments. If a man defers his repentance to the last, and in the mean time rejects all the faithful admonitions of the Holy Spirit, God frequently withdraws his gracious influence; so that his heart becomes alike incapable either of receiving comfort, or of praying for Divine assistance. Besides, it is very probable, that this malefactor never had such an opportunity before; and now he no sooner sees the patience and resignation, and hears the powerful prayer and affectionate words of

Christ, but immediately, instead of hardening his heart as his desperate companion did, he relents, acknowledges his guilt, and humbly seeks the favour of Christ. But with Christians it is quite otherwise. The Lord Jesus stands at the door of our hearts, and waits for admission. Besides, the day of our death often comes as a thief in the night, sudden and unexpected. At the hour of death, generally the heart of man is extremely afflicted, his body is full of inexpressible pains, his soul is overwhelmed with anguish and terror, his mental powers languid and confused, so as to render him incapable of any regular action, or recollection of the errors of his past life. Therefore repent in the day of grace, and use that precious time before it be elapsed.

3. The instance before us is also a mirror of the kingly glory of Jesus Christ, which here beams forth from amidst the clouds of the deepest abasement and ignominy. By this instance, our crucified Saviour demonstrates, that he has not only the keys of death and hell, with which he opens the abyss of eternal darkness for the despisers of his grace, and shuts it, that his faithful servants may not fall into it; but also the keys of Paradise, and of the glorious mansions in his Father's house. This is a kind of prelude to the last Judgement; for Paradise is here promised to one malefactor; and shut against another, who is consigned to eternal misery. Acquaint yourselves, therefore, betimes
with

with this Lord of Paradise. Be not ashamed of having fellowship with him in his abasement, that he may not be ashamed of having fellowship with you, in his glory.

In this mirrour we may see the manner of making a happy exit; and from hence we may learn, how to behave in our last moments. We must, after the example of this penitent malefactor,

First, Acknowledge our manifold sins, and confess that by them we have deserved God's wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal condemnation.

Secondly, From this terrifying thought we must turn ourselves to Jesus Christ, who alone blotteth out sin; and appeal from justice to grace, from wrath to mercy. We must pray to our Saviour to look on us with a favourable eye, as he looked on this malefactor; and to remember us in his kingdom of glory.

Thirdly, We must patiently bear the pains which God is pleased to inflict on us; and in order to alleviate them, we should fix our thoughts on that Paradise, which our dying Mediator has obtained for his faithful servants.

Fourthly, We must acknowledge our blessed Saviour to be the Lord of that glorious Paradise, and that he has power over life and death, heaven and hell, salvation and condemnation.

II.

Let us now consider the second gift, which Christ bestowed while he hung on the cross; and this was a faithful Son to his disconsolate mother, to be her guardian and protector. The blessed Jesus, now languishing at the point of death, and in the most exquisite pain, is not unmindful of his mother; but expresses a tender concern for her: For as he had loved his 'own who were in the world, he loved them 'unto the end (b).'

Our blessed Lord's affectionate mother had attended him to the place of execution, and there stood as near the cross to which her beloved Son was fastened, as the croud would permit her. Then certainly was old Simeon's prophecy concerning her fulfilled, 'Yea a sword shall pierce through thy own soul 'also (i).' For every opprobrious, deriding, and abusive word that was thrown out against her innocent Son, penetrated her maternal heart like a keen arrow. But God, in a very singular manner supported the blessed Virgin in these melancholy circumstances; for we do not read that she made any lamentations, tore her hair, wrung her hands, or that she fainted away. On the contrary, she possessed her soul in faith and patience; for she had probably been, many years before, inured to the mystery of the

(b) John xiii. 1.

(i) Luke ii. 35.

Cross, and both from the prophetic writings, and her Son's own information, had learned that his sufferings should have a glorious issue.

But with Mary the mother of our Lord stood two other devout women, namely, her sister who was married to a man called Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord Jesus had cast seven devils (*k*), for which extraordinary favour she, on her side, shewed her gratitude to her deliverer, so as not to forsake him even at the cross. These feeble attendants, by thus approaching near the cross, shamed our Saviour's disciples; none of whom now dared to shew their heads, St. John alone excepted. These devout women made good the saying of Solomon, namely, 'that love is strong as death (*l*).' For it is the nature of true love not to fear any danger, or to be separated from its beloved object by any distress.

Now the blessed Jesus, looking down from the cross, saw his disconsolate mother, and St. John, the disciple whom he particularly loved, standing by her.

Hereupon our blessed Lord said unto her, 'Woman behold thy son;' and thus gave his childless parent another son, who was to cherish, protect, and take care of her in her old age, and to be as a faithful guardian and sincere friend to her on all occasions. It is very probable that our blessed Lord perceived, that his mother's anxious heart was agitated with these

(*k*) Luke viii. 2.

(*l*) Cantic. viii. 6.

or the like thoughts: Alas! what will become of me in the world, now my beloved Son is taken from me? who will protect such a poor, disconsolate, weak woman as I am? Jesus therefore calls out to her in the tenderest accents, There is my best beloved disciple! he will be instead of a son to you. He will take care of you, be a comfortable support to you, and will shew you all the tenderness and affection of a dutiful son.

III.

Immediately after this follows the third gift, conferred by our blessed Lord while he hung on the cross. He now turns his benign countenance to his beloved disciple, and addresses him in these words: 'Behold thy mother!' By this speech, Jesus not only enjoins his disciple for the future to behave to Mary as if she was his own mother, and to perform all those duties, which an affectionate parent can expect from an obedient son; but he likewise commits to St. John a most precious jewel, the 'blessed among women,' who had found such favour with God as to bring forth the Seed of the woman. Thus our blessed Saviour, as it were in his last will, leaves to his favourite disciple what was dearest to him of any thing in this world. The disciple was very far from looking on this as a chargeable incumbrance, but accounted it a singular honour, and immediately secured.

secured this valuable legacy. For we read, that ' From that hour the disciple took her to his ' own home;' where he supplied every thing necessary for her support during the remainder of her life. She lived with this disciple, according to some commentators, till the sixty-third year of her age. St. John was the more expeditious to receive this precious deposit committed to him, being persuaded that his care of the mother of the blessed Jesus would entitle him to call the Lord Jesus his brother, in a stricter sense than other believers.

By these words Christ has confirmed the fifth commandment, and set to all children a pattern of the tender care and affection, which they ought to shew for their parents; and that this care should extend to their last moments, not only in acts of kindness and filial duty, but also by making provision for them if they survive their children. Hence we shall now deduce the following inferences.

1. No real detriment will happen to any Christian by partaking of the reproach of Christ.

How richly are the Blessed Virgin and St. John rewarded for the fidelity, which they shewed to the blessed Jesus by attending him in his last moments. Nor was the attendance of the other devout women disregarded by our blessed Lord; for they had afterwards the honour of being the first witnesses and promulgators of his Resurrection (*m*). Thus the blessed

(*m*) Mark xvi. 1—9.

Jesus leaves none of those, who are not ashamed of the fellowship of his sufferings, without their reward. Infidelity would indeed persuade men, that they incur great damages by such a fellowship; that it is a great detriment to their temporal callings, &c. But these are all groundless and fallacious suggestions, which may be confuted by numberless instances. Now supposing that all human aid should forsake us; supposing persecution and distress should attend us; yet we may depend on His friendship, who is the Lord of heaven and earth, who keeps the keys of Paradise and the mansions of bliss; and is ever fulfilling what he has promised in these words: ‘ Verily I say unto you, There
 ‘ is no man that hath left house, or brethren,
 ‘ or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or
 ‘ children, or lands, for my sake, and the
 ‘ Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundred
 ‘ fold now in this time, houses and brethren,
 ‘ and sisters, and mothers, and children, and
 ‘ lands, with persecutions; and in the world
 ‘ to come, eternal life (n).’ Therefore let us courageously enlist among the followers of our crucified Saviour; for none of us will repent of having so done, through all the days of eternity.

2. Our blessed Lord has shewn it to be his express will, that they, who believe in his name, should be inseparably joined in the bands of love and unity. We are not to con-

(n) Mark x. 29, 30.

fine these words of Christ, as if they related only to his mother and beloved disciple; for in this his last testament *, the Lord Jesus has enjoined, that every believer should do to another all the kind offices he can, and that Christians should shew all possible love, friendship, and benevolence to each other. As he has loved us and given himself up to death for us, he confirms the New Commandment, That we should love one another, and by this testamentary injunction, makes this command irrevocable. How then can it be known that we are the disciples of Christ, unless we love one another, and bear each others burdens? This is a duty, which we more particularly owe to the necessitous and the destitute, to strangers, widows, and orphans; and especially, to the poor members of the sacred body of the Lord Jesus. Though the mother of our blessed Lord has been long since dead; yet many pious Christians still remain, of whom Jesus hath said, 'whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (o).' Therefore, when we take such persons in their destitute and comfortless circumstances under

* Testabatur de cruce Christus, & inter matrem atque discipulum dividebat pietatis officia. Condebat Dominus testamentum; signabat Johannes. AMBROSIUS Lib. III. Ep. 24. Rectè tamen HIERONYMUS distinguendum esse monet inter hoc Testamentum domesticum, & quod in Eucharistia condiderat publicum, quod *καινη διαθηκη* appellat, Matth. xxvi. 28.

(o) Matth. xii. 50.

our care, the sympathizing Jesus accepts of our kindness, not only as if it were done to his parent; but as a favour bestowed on himself, and will reward it accordingly. Let us therefore, express our love to our crucified Saviour by carefully observing this his last precept, and endeavour to alleviate and sweeten this troublesome life to our afflicted brethren, by our labour of love, and practice all manner of reciprocal kind offices.

3. A chearful and ready obedience to the commands of our Saviour is the surest mark of the disciple whom Jesus loveth.

St. John, in the instance before us, shews himself to be the disciple whom Jesus loved, by immediately fulfilling his Master's last command with such a ready willingness. For we do not read that he excused himself, and pleaded his own poverty; or that he represented the several avocations of his Apostolic office, &c. But, from that hour, instantly, he took the Virgin Mother to his own home. If therefore we would be the disciples of Christ, and such disciples as he loveth, and in whom his soul is well pleased; we must do his will from the heart, and execute his commands with a ready obedience; we must set aside the excuses of the flesh, and the evasions of unbelief; and must rejoice at an opportunity of shewing our love to our blessed Saviour, and those who belong to his household.

Filial

4. Filial love, besides a cordial affection for parents, ought to shew itself in all obedience and fidelity. Thus in spiritual things, it must appear by praying for, and caring for the welfare of their souls; and, as children cannot requite the benefits they have received from their parents, by supplicating God that he would reward them. Likewise it should appear in temporal things, by promoting their parents advantage as far as possible; by preventing any damage befalling them, vindicating their good name, assisting them in sickness, poverty, and decrepid age, &c. The honour due to parents consists in the sentiments of the heart, which should be filled with a sincere reverence for them, and shew itself by respectful words and behaviour, and a ready obedience without murmurs, delay, or contradiction; by complying with their lawful commands, and submitting to their reproofs and corrections; by conforming to their advice, patiently bearing their foibles, and throwing a veil over their faults. Such should be the temper and behaviour of all Christian children towards their parents.

5. Our blessed Saviour by his behaviour in his last moments, intended to set a good example in several particulars to dying persons.

He teaches them

First, That they should not behave forwardly and impatiently, under the pains they feel,

feel, to those who attend them in their sickness.

Secondly, That they should administer comfort to their afflicted parents, relations, children, &c. who lament their approaching departure, by kind and soothing expressions.

Thirdly, That they should edify them by their example, patience, piety, and devotion, under their sufferings.

Fourthly, That they should settle their worldly concerns with a resigned composure of mind.

Fifthly, That they are not to put off the settling of their temporal affairs to the last moment; but ought to reserve some remainder of time to bestow more immediately on the future welfare of their souls.

Sixthly, That on their death-bed they should do acts of charity, and remember poor widows and orphans, by bestowing something upon them, in order to shew the sincerity of their faith and love.

Seventhly, That they should endeavour, by cordial exhortations on their death-bed, to kindle up in their families the flame of brotherly love and affection, and more closely unite their relations in the bond of perfection and peace. The observance of these duties will make us resemble the benevolent Jesus in our last moments.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Faithful and ever-living Saviour! we thank thee who didst confer such excellent and invaluable gifts on the Cross, by which thou hast manifested to all the world, not only thy love, but likewise thy riches and power. Thou now livest in strength, and art completely entered on thy government over heaven and earth. Thou hast now the keys of hell and death, of heaven and of paradise: Eternal life and every good gift are in thy hands. Draw us, we beseech thee, so powerfully to thee, that we may be also partakers of thy manifold gifts. Thy unperishable riches are so far from being exhausted, during these seventeen hundred years that have elapsed since thy crucifixion, that thou hast yet in store gifts sufficient for men, even for backsliders; and there are still mansions enough in thy Father's house, into which thou wilt admit those who are not ashamed of thy sufferings, and thy Cross. Bless, O Lord, that part of thy Word which has been at present considered, that it may be to all a balsam of life, and may support us to the end, under all the troubles and afflictions which we may meet with in following thee. Grant this for the sake of that love, with which thou hast loved thine own unto the end. Amen. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

The last sufferings of the LORD JESUS.

‘ (a) **N**OW from the sixth hour there was
 ‘ darkness over all the land until the
 ‘ ninth hour; and the sun was darkened.
 ‘ And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with
 ‘ a loud voice, *Eli, Eli, lama asabthani*, that
 ‘ is to say, My God! my God! why hast thou
 ‘ forsaken me? Some of them that stood there,
 ‘ when they heard that, said, Behold, this man
 ‘ calleth for Elias. After this, Jesus knowing
 ‘ that all things were now accomplished, that
 ‘ the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I
 ‘ thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of
 ‘ vinegar: And one ran and took a sponge,
 ‘ and filled it with vinegar, and put it upon
 ‘ hyssop, or stuck it on a reed, and held it
 ‘ to his mouth, and gave him to drink. The
 ‘ rest said, Let be; let us see whether Elias
 ‘ will come to save him, and take him down.
 ‘ Now when Jesus had received the vinegar,
 ‘ he said, It is finished. And he again cried
 ‘ with a loud voice, and said, Father, into thy
 ‘ hands I commend my spirit! And having
 ‘ said this, he bowed his head, and gave up
 ‘ the ghost.

(a) Matth. xxvii. 45—50. Mark xv. 33—37. Luke
 xxiii. 44—46 John xix. 28—30.

In

In this part of the Evangelical history of the Passion, we have an account both of the last words, and last sufferings of the Lord Jesus. The last words of Christ on the cross have been illustrated on another occasion *, to which, for brevity's sake, I refer the reader ; and now direct our attention chiefly to the last sufferings of our blessed Lord, yet so as not to omit entirely his last words. Five particulars are specified in the words which we have cited above, namely,

First, The darkness and desertion which oppressed his spotless soul.

Secondly, The mockery of the spectators, when he broke out into those remarkable words, which this agony of his soul extorted from him.

Thirdly, The painful thirst he endured on the cross.

Fourthly, The giving him vinegar to drink by way of derision. And

Fifthly, The separation of his soul and body by death. These last sufferings of the blessed Jesus we shall treat of in such a method, as to shew how a devout Christian should meditate on them, and elevate his soul to his Saviour in pious ejaculations.

* Vide *Betrachtungen der sieben letzten Worte des gekreuzigten Jesus*, or "Considerations on the seven Last Words of the crucified Jesus," by the Author.

I.

The first among these various sufferings of our blessed Lord was the darkness and desertion which oppressed his spotless soul. The dreadful judgements, which God now poured forth on our blessed Saviour, were visibly attended with a total eclipse of the sun. Concerning this remarkable phenomenon, and the desertion of his soul, it is said in the words of the text, ' Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? '

When a pious Christian here observes the exact account, which the Holy Spirit has caused to be taken of the hour of this extreme inward suffering of Christ, he perceives with a holy reverence, how the particular providence of God over-ruled every circumstance of the sufferings of his Son. For the Evangelists observe, that this darkness lasted from the sixth to the ninth hour; or, according to our computation of time, it began about twelve at noon with an eclipse of the sun, and drew towards a period about three of the clock in the afternoon. The hours are not so punctually set down in the account of any of the transactions of our Saviour's life, as they are in the history of

of his sufferings. It might seem as if Jesus had been entirely given up to the will of his enemies ; but the case was quite otherwise : The providence of God had prescribed limits to their rage ; so that they neither could lay hold of him before his hour was come, nor torment him longer than had been pre-determined by God's eternal decree. The same Providence had likewise set certain bounds to the prince of darkness, and confined to a limited time the duration of his rage and fury against the blessed Seed of the woman.

O my God, may an afflicted soul here say, my sufferings are not at all to be compared for merit to those of my Saviour ; yet I know, that even the hours of my sufferings are limited by thy Providence, and that thou countest them out unto me. Thou appointest the beginning and the end of my sufferings. Thou frequently orderest, that at noon-day my soul shall be involved in darkness ; and that it shall sometimes lose the comfortable assurance of thy love, at a time when it shone brightest, and when my soul was full of light, and joyed for thy salvation. Preserve me, O my Father, from ever finding fault with thy computation of the hours ; but that I may rather acquiesce with my whole heart in what thou art pleased to inflict upon me. I know that thou orderest every thing for the good of thy creatures. Thou wilt not only count the hours of my sorrows and sufferings ; but wilt graciously

shorten them, and never suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear. Preserve me, O Lord, from the gloom of unbelief, from the darkness of spiritual blindness, and from the eternal night of the dark abyss. Grant that I may walk and work in the light while it is day, before the night comes on, when no man can work.

But justly is the soul astonished at seeing the Son of God, the effulgence of eternal glory, and the source of all light in the kingdoms of Nature and Grace, hang three tedious hours on the cross amidst the horrors of darkness. What can this mean, that the natural sun loses its brightness, and all the land, or rather the whole earth * in every part where it should then be day, is involved in thick darkness? The vast body of the sun, which imparts light not only to the earth, but also to the moon and other planets, is totally obscured! This was no usual or common eclipse of the sun, which falls out when the moon is in a direct line between the sun and our earth; and even then, the sun does not properly loose its radiancy, but its beams are intercepted by the intervening moon from falling on the earth, and consequently illuminating it. Such natural eclipses can never happen at the full of the moon, as it was at

* Nam *terra* yn hic æquè, ac Luc. xxi. 35. Rom. ix. 17. x. 13. & alibi *totam mundi universitatem* denotat. Videatur CHRISTOPH TOBIÆ WIDEBURGII *diff. de obscuracione solis in Passione Dominica.*

that

that time, nor last above an hour and a half; whereas this darkness happened at the full of the moon, and lasted three whole hours. In this instance likewise, the rays of the sun were not intercepted by the moon; but, as St. Luke expressly says, the sun itself was darkened. When a pious Christian enquires into the signification of this extraordinary phenomenon which happened during our Saviour's passion, he will find, that

1. With regard to the Jewish people, this total darkness denoted, that by crucifying the Messiah they committed such a horrid work of darkness, that the sun would not behold it, nor lend its beams to the perpetration of such an atrocious deed; consequently that God was in the highest manner provoked against the murderers of his Son, and would manifest his wrath from heaven on this wicked and perverse generation; that he would withdraw from them the light of his knowledge and grace, together with all true joy and comfort, and thrust them into the extreme darkness of blindness and obduracy *. He may further conclude, that these words of Isaiah were to be fulfilled in the Jewish nation: 'If one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light

* *Occasus solis* est amissio felicitatis & gaudii Jer. xv. 9. Mich. iii. 6. Sic NIC. GURTCERUS, in *Brevi Explicatione rerum typico-prophetiarum*, p. 212. Et p. 225. *Tenebræ* sunt imago calamitatis & miseriæ, Job. xix. 8. necnon ignorantiae ac superstitionis, Isa. xlii. 7. Eph. v. 8.

' is darkened in the heaven thereof. And
 ' they shall look unto the earth, and behold
 ' trouble, darkness, and dimness of anguish;
 ' and they shall be driven to darkness (b).' To
 this also the prophet Amos possibly alludes
 when he joins the going down of the sun at
 noon, and darkening the earth in the clear day,
 with the famine of the Word of the Lord
 sent upon the Land (c). Thus, this extraordi-
 nary darkening of the sun was a dismal pre-
 sage of the spiritual darkness of that wretched
 nation to this very hour, which the Lord Jesus
 had predicted by saying unto them, ' Walk
 ' while ye have light, lest darkness come
 ' upon you (d).'

2. With regard to our blessed Lord himself,
 this outward darkness was an emblem of the
 inward darkness, in which his sacred soul was
 then involved. For as the light of the natural
 sun was then withdrawn from the inhabitants
 of the earth; so the light of the Divine con-
 solation and inward joy was at that time with-
 drawn from the soul of Jesus Christ: and as
 cold and darkness then prevailed throughout
 the whole region of the air; so the soul of our
 blessed Saviour was to experience something of
 the terrors of eternal darkness; which now
 overwhelmed his conscience, from a sense of
 the imputation of all the sins of the whole
 world, and threw it into the utmost anguish and

(b) Isaiah v. 30. viii. 22.

(c) Chap. viii. 9, 11.

(d) John xii. 35.

consternation. This supernatural darkness was an extraordinary work of the Divine Power, and served to shew that Christ was, during that interval, as it were, forsaken by God; so that the visible heaven, the outward court of God's glorious mansion, was deprived of its luminaries during this catastrophe, and no creature enjoyed the enlivening influence of the sun.

O my Saviour, a pious Christian may say, thus was it represented in thy glorious person, what a dark partition sin has made between God and mankind; how it obscured the light of God's benign countenance, and at last would have cast the benighted soul into outward darkness. It was I who deserved to be shut up in this dark prison, who had forsaken the Father of lights; and had loved darkness rather than light. But thou didst appear in my stead, O thou bright Effulgence of everlasting light! and didst permit the terrors of eternal night to environ thee, and the power of darkness to assault thee; that thou mightest overcome them, and thereby open to me an access to light and glory, and acquire for me a right to the inheritance of the Saints in light. O give me an irreconcilable hatred against the unfruitful works of darkness, that I may never have any fellowship with them, but rather reprove them. Grant that I may walk in the light, as a child of light, that I may have fellowship with God, who is the source of light. But if, by my open profession of Christianity, I should be deserted
by

by many, and be surrounded with obscurity and a disconsolate gloom; if the light of thy grace should hide itself from the soul; if the hope of my adoption, and of the remission of my sins should be extinguished, so that I must cry out with the Psalmist, 'Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, and in the deeps (e);' grant, that according to thy example, I may, in silent patience, wait for the dawn of thy light.

When a pious soul farther employs its thoughts on our Saviour's address to his Father about the ninth hour, towards the period both of the outward and inward darkness, when he cried out, 'My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?' it stands amazed at the filial disposition of the Lord Jesus; who, notwithstanding the agonies that surrounded him, as it were embraces his Father with cordial love, and with a loud cry, which appears to have been accompanied with a flood of tears, (f), twice calls to him, My God! My God! As if he had said, "Thou art still my Almighty God, who canst deliver my human nature from this extreme anguish. However severely thou dealest with me; though thou hidest thy face from me; yet will I never turn my looks from thee. The eternal covenant for the redemption of mankind, made between thyself and me, still remains fixed and unmoveable; and tho' all the

(e) Psal. lxxxviii. 6.

(f) Heb. v. 7.

" floods

“floods of the river of Belial beat against me,
“my confidence in thee shall never be shaken.”

Moreover, our blessed Saviour asked the cause of this desertion, by saying to his Father, ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’ But this was done for our sake, in order to awaken us to reflection. God never forsakes any, but those who have first forsaken him (*g*). Now the blessed Jesus had never forsaken his heavenly Father: but, on the contrary, had always done those things that pleased him (*b*). Consequently the cause of this desertion is to be sought, not in him, but in us. Alas! we indeed had forsaken our Creator, we had forfeited his precious favour, his inestimable affection; and parted with it as a thing of no worth, in order to satisfy a base passion. God may daily complain of us, ‘They have forsaken me, the fountain ‘of living waters.’ For we may daily observe multitudes, who, for worthless trifles, for a little money, some fleeting sensual gratification, some empty honour, forsake the fountain of all blessings, and transfer their love and confidence to the creatures. Now for the expiation of such a heinous sin, for the reparation of the honour which the Divine Majesty is thereby robbed of; the only begotten Son of the Father here laments, that he is forsaken of God; and this not in mere idea, but in reality. For as Christ had taken our sins upon him, and become a curse for us; so was he

(*g*) 2 Chron. xii. 5.

(*b*) John viii. 29.

forfaken

forfaken by God not only outwardly, by withdrawing his protection from him and giving him up to his enemies (*i*), but likewise inwardly; the Deity fufpending his blifsful operations on his understanding, Will, confcience, and affections, and permitting all the power of the devil, and the agonies of death, jointly to affault him. As, in quality of our Surety, he was to feel our pains, to bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows (*k*); fo was his foul to be deprived, for a while, of the brightnefs of God's countenance, and the enjoyment of the fupreme Good, by which the inward fenfation of the pain would have been very much abated, if not totally extinguifhed. On the other hand, he was to fuffer all the floods of the Divine wrath to pafs over him; which would have overwhelmed our Saviour's human nature, had not the Divinity within him fupported it in this terrible trial. Thus, under this grievous depreflion of body and foul, God remained the ftrength and portion of his heart (*l*); fo that in this extreme mental agony, he adhered to the Almighty God with undifmayed confidence, wrefled with him all the time of this darknefs, and did not leave him till he had obtained for us the affurance of a bleffing. As our bleffed Saviour produced the merit of his innocence, and his perfect filial obedience, to fill up the horrid gulf that was between God and man; he has thereby

(*i*) Pfal. iii. 2.(*k*) Ifa. liii. 4.(*l*) Pfal. lxxiii. 26.

opened to us a way to gain the friendship of God, reconciled heaven and earth, and again acquired for us a right to a fellowship with God, which we had unhappily forfeited.

O my Saviour ! I am astonished to see in this mirror of wrath, the effects and consequences of sin. Forgive me, who have drawn upon thee such a terrible privation of all comfort, such a dreadful feeling of the Divine wrath ! May I hence learn, how terrible a thing sin is in the sight of God, and what a dreadful separation it has made between God and man. Grant that I may highly value that fellowship with God, to which thou hast obtained for me a right ; and that I may highly value and rejoice in that comfortable promise of thy Father, who hath said, ‘ I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ Stand by me, O blessed Redeemer, in the hour of desertion ! That gloomy path thou hast sanctified, by patiently bearing to be deserted by every comfort, and hast changed into a way of benediction. Now, thou knowest what it is to be thus deserted, and, as a merciful High Priest, canst have compassion on those who are in such a state. Nay, thou wast deserted for that very purpose, that I might not be eternally forsaken. If, with distressed Sion, I must some time cry out, ‘ The Lord hath forsaken and forgotten me (*m*) ;’ yet assure thyself, O my soul, that thou shalt no longer be called the forsaken and hated (*n*) ; but that,

(*m*) Isa. xlix. 14.

(*n*) Isa. lx. 15.

with

with St. Paul, thou wilt be able to say, 'I am persecuted, but not forsaken (o).' In such circumstances, may thy meritorious sufferings benefit me. May thy affectionate exclamation, My God, my God, be as a strong preservative against despondency; so that my heart, even in darkness, may wait the dawn of thy heavenly light. And as, for my sake, thou hast descended so low, and wast plunged so deep in misery that thy soul was forsaken, and stripped of all consolatory influences; make me willing to be deprived of every thing for thy sake, that I may be found in thee. With these and the like good thoughts, a faithful Christian considers this last part of our Saviour's sufferings.

II.

We come, in the next place, to consider the mockery of the spectators, at the words which the extreme anguish of the blessed Jesus extorted from him. 'Some of them who stood there, said, He calleth for Elias.' Here one may be justly astonished at the power of darkness, which displays itself in this deriding speech. These scoffers must certainly have been Jews; since the heathens knew nothing of Elias *. But the Jews, at that time, had a great many false notions concerning that prophet; for they imagined that before the coming of the Messiah, he

(o) 2 Cor. iv. 9.

* Or Elijah, as he is called in the Old Testament.

would

would be sent from heaven, whither he had been taken up alive ; and that he would come again upon the earth, and perform several remarkable actions. Now when they heard the crucified Jesus crying out in such plaintive accents, *Eli, Eli*, though they well knew that in these words of the Psalmist (*p*) he addressed himself to the mighty God of heaven, they immediately perverted his words, and of *Eli*, made *Elias*. Thus they scoffingly charge him with imploring the assistance of that prophet, so eminent for his miracles ; nay they pretend, that in his distress he departed from the living God, and placed his confidence in the creature. Consequently they insinuate, that he died as an Idolater, and therefore went down to the grave with the curse of God upon him ; it being said by the Prophet, ‘ Cursed be the man ‘ that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, ‘ and whose heart departeth from the Lord (*q*).’

Alas ! there must be in the human heart an unfathomable abyfs of wickedness. These impious scoffers were, for three hours successively, shakled with the bands of darkness ; and had seen and felt the Divine displeasure in the extraordinary miracle, whereby the light of the sun was extinguished : Yet, no sooner did the light begin to return ; scarce were they recovered from their fear and consternation, but they renew their former insolence, and make a mock of our blessed Savi-

(*p*) Psal. xxii. 1.

(*q*) Jer. xvii. 5.

our's doleful cries. I tremble to think that the seed of such impiety lurks in the human heart. I see many who have no sooner risen from the bed of death, and are scarce recovered from a dangerous fit of sickness, or narrowly escaped with their lives from some imminent danger, but they immediately return to their drunkenness, voluptuousness, and sensuality; to their pride, deceit, lying, mocking, and profane jesting. Be merciful, O my Saviour, to such unhappy men, concerning whom thou canst not but complain, 'I chastise them, but they feel it not;' and grant that thy judgments, whether seen, heard, or felt, may make a deep and lasting impression on my soul!

But O my Redeemer, if I should be treated as thou wast on the Cross; if insolent men should mock and deride me, and pervert the words of the mournful lamentations which grief and pain may extort from me; grant that I may think on thy patience and resignation under such sufferings. Ever preserve me from the impiety of adding to the pains of the afflicted, by mockery and derision; on the contrary, give me a tender and compassionate heart, that I may weep with those that weep, and sympathize with the distresses of others.

III.

In the third place, we are to consider the painful thirst which our blessed Lord endured. How must the arrows of the Almighty have, as it were

were, drank up our Saviour's blood, when he thus complained of thirst! How must his soul have laboured, during the three hours of darkness, and his body, already exhausted by the loss of so much blood, have been totally deprived of its strength, so that his tongue claved to the roof of his mouth!

Thanks be to thee, O blessed Jesus, who wast so earnest in the work of my redemption, as to forget to eat or drink; labouring in that arduous task, till thou wast quite spent, and all thy vital juices were in a manner exhausted. By this thy painful thirst, thou hast atoned for my relinquishing the Fountain of living waters, and delivered me from eternal thirst and want. Thou hast by thy sufferings opened a way for penitent sinners into Paradise, to the water of life which issues from the throne of God, and to the rivers of heavenly pleasures.

But here a pious soul may say, Could my Saviour, who was now taken up in accomplishing the arduous work of my redemption, feel any other thirst besides that of his body? Yes certainly, his soul, like a hunted stag, thirsted after the springs of God's comforts. It passionately, longed to see his enlivening countenance, which now, for a while, had been as it were hid from him. Nay, his benevolent soul also thirsted after my soul, and its eternal salvation. Hast thou, O my Redeemer, thus desired my happiness? How desirous should I be, in return, of thy grace! Therefore, as

the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God (*r*)! Kindle in me an ardent thirst after thy righteousness; and, on the other hand, quench and deaden in me all thirst after the pleasures of the world, after its honours and riches. For amidst all these, one is like a thirsty man, who dreameth, and, as the prophet says, 'behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint (*s*).'
Give me to drink of the water which thou freely givest to the thirsty; and at last, O my Saviour, lead me to those fountains of living waters, where thy Saints shall thirst no more (*t*).

Lastly, When a pious Christian farther considers, that the Lord Jesus publicly made known his thirst that the Scripture might be fulfilled; it being expressly said by the Evangelist, that he cried out, 'I thirst;' he admires the reverence which the Eternal Word of God expressed for the written Word of God. Jesus well knew, that this declaration of his thirst would draw on him a fresh insult; yet he was far from declining any additional suffering, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and that the truth of it might be confirmed by a new seal. O preserve me from undervaluing the Word of the living God, or contemptuously using it as a dead letter! Grant that I may rather honour it as the voice of the supreme Majesty of heaven, and chuse it for the rule of my faith

(*r*) Psal. xlii. 1.(*s*) Isa. xxix. 8.(*t*) Rev. vii. 16, 17.

and practice ; and that I may be willing to suffer any thing, that the Scripture may be fulfilled in me. ‘ For they who will live godly
‘ in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution (u).’

IV.

We come, in the fourth place, to consider the insult offered to our blessed Lord, by giving him vinegar to drink. For when the soldiers heard the languishing Jesus complain of thirst, they filled a sponge with vinegar [which was in a vessel at hand, as it was in that age the common drink for soldiers *,] and put it on a reed, or, according to St. John, a stalk cut from a large-hyssop shrub †, and held it up to his dry and parched lips by way of derision, instead of a cordial to support his drooping Spirits.

(u) 2 Tim. iii. 12.

* SIC SPARTIANUS in Pescennio ; *fussit vinum in expeditione neminem bibere, sed aceto universos esse contentos.* Vide JUST. LIPSIUM, *de Militia Romana, Lib. V. Dial. XVI.*

† Ita enim facillimè conciliari possunt Matthæi, Marci, & Johannis Narrationes. Nam quod illi dixerunt περιδεις κάλαμου, Johannes expressit περιδεις ὑσσωπω. *Calamus* enim tam Græcis quàm Latinis caulem significat, sive cavum, sive plenum ac solidum. Qualis vero caulis fuerit, Johannes commemorat, scilicet *hyssopi* ; in cujus generibus datur aliquod paulo grandius, caules erigens altiores, duros, ac lignosos, ex quibus faciliè virgæ, vel baculi fieri possunt, quorum extremitati spongia potest alligari. Conf. SAGITTARIUS, *Harm. Hist. Pass. p. 963, 964.* CLAUD. SALMASIUM, *de Cruce, p. 288, 311, 317, 582.* qui ideo militem *hyssopi* frutice usum fuisse conjectat, ut simul *odore* ejus crucifixus paullulum reficeretur, cordisque deliquium tantisper averteretur, donec Elias adventaret. Odor enim hyssopi, narius admotus, recreare languentes solet.

196 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

Here a devout soul is amazed, on the one hand, at the obduracy and barbarity of the human heart, and that these wicked men should be so utterly void of humanity and compassion; and, on the other hand, at the greatness of our Saviour's love to mankind, who endured all this for our sake. Our blessed Saviour, by this circumstance of his passion, also fulfilled the Scripture, which he himself inspired; where he appoints this kind of suffering for himself, and says by the mouth of the Psalmist, 'In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (x).' He likewise confirmed his own words to his disciples: 'I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine (y).' O dearest Redeemer, thanks be to thee for thine inconceivable love! Every thing which was transacted on the Cross, was done for my good. It was out of love to me, that thou wast thirsty; it was out of love to my soul, that thou didst drink. Grant, that when thou thirstest in thy poor members, I may relieve and comfort them, not with vinegar, but to the best of my power. But if the world should give me a disagreeable sour potion in my distress, may it be sweetened by the memory of thy love and patience!

But the astonishment of a pious Christian will yet encrease, when he calls to mind that the Jews, who stood about the Cross, still mocked thee, our dear Redeemer! For while the sol-

(x) Psal. lxxix. 21.

(y) Matth. xxvi. 29.

dier was pressing the sponge filled with vinegar to his sacred mouth, they called out in a deriding manner, 'Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save him!' According to St. Mark's account, the inhuman soldier likewise joined in the mockery. In these words the spirit of reviling had inserted his venomous sting; for by this the Jews intimated, that the Lord Jesus was a false Messiah; who, since no body acknowledged him on the Cross, expressed a desire that Elias would come and perform a miracle, by taking him down from the Cross, and by that means declare and constitute him the Messiah. O my Saviour! must then all the waves and storms of affliction, with combined impetuosity, pass over thee in the last moments of thy life? Has it cost thee so dear to open the consolatory spring of life to me, a wretched worm, that my fainting soul may be refreshed with goodness and mercy? Eternal thanks be to thee for such transcendent love! Grant that I may readily determine to bear the most disagreeable sensations, in following thee; and not think it strange that the world should embitter any cordial it offers me, and, under the show of a kind office, should grieve my soul with mockeries and insults. O preserve me in the hour of suffering, and grant that I may not turn my confidence from God to the creatures! Though the world slander and revile me, I will wrap myself in silence, and refer the manifestation of my innocence to thee.

V.

Lastly, all these sufferings of our Saviour were succeeded by the separation of his soul and body, by a blessed, but torturing death. After Jesus had received the vinegar, nothing further remained to be transacted or suffered on the Cross. He had now drunk off the cup of sufferings; the Law was fulfilled; sin was sealed up, the guilt of it atoned for, and the punishment endured.

O the joy of a faithful soul, at hearing his Saviour cry out, 'It is finished!' Ever praised be thy name, O my God, that I have a complete Mediator, 'who, by offering one great sacrifice, hath perfected for ever all those that are sanctified (x).' Therefore, O thou ALPHA and OMEGA, I will in faith embrace thee, the great Author and finisher of my Faith. Thou hast finished whatever appertained to my redemption; this thy meritorious work I will produce at the Divine tribunal, and with it cover the defects of my imperfect obedience. Grant, O my Saviour, that the work of grace may be also finished in me. Give me not only to will and believe; but likewise to do and accomplish what thou commandest, according to thy good pleasure; and grant that I may keep the faith, and at last obtain the crown of righteousness.

(x) Heb. x. 14.

And now our blessed Redeemer prepares himself for death. Here the pious soul wonders at the resignation, which his Saviour displays at the hour of death. The Evangelical history informs us, that he again cried with a loud voice, and said, ' Father, into thy hands I commend ' my Spirit; and having said this, he bowed ' his head, and gave up the Ghost.' Here we may recollect a former saying of the Lord Jesus, namely, ' No man taketh my life ' from me; but I lay it down of myself(g). He delivered up his soul as a precious pledge into the hands of his Father, from whom, he knew, he should again receive it on the third day. Thanks be to thee, O Saviour, says the pious soul, for entering so willingly on death. Thanks be to thee, that with thy soul thou hast also recommended my soul into the hands of the Father. O my Saviour, extirpate from my heart all fear of death; and let thy willingness to die also work in me a willing desire to depart, and to be with thee.

But this loud cry, with which our Saviour gave up the Ghost, probably proceeded from extreme pain and agony. The death which HE suffered was quite different from that of his followers. Death, when it attacked him, was not divested of its sharp sting, which the Mediator was severely to feel. The pains of death came on him, as the pains of birth on a woman in travail. He was to taste of death in all its bitterness; and

(g) John x. 18,

by that means, to extract its sting and disarm it (*b*); so that it might be changed into a tranquil sleep to believers. Thanks be to thee, O my Saviour, who by thy death hast taken away the power of death, and hast divested him of his sting, so that I need no more be afraid of it. May thy last words be my light, when death shall oppress my soul with its gloomy horrors! O eternal Word, let thy loud cry speak for me, when my power of speech shall fail; and may I in my death enjoy the fruit of thy victory over death; so that even the last shout of thy Host with which thou shalt come to Judgment, instead of terror, may be a sound of joy and exultation to me.

T H E P R A Y E R.

LORD Jesus, bless to our souls this Consideration of thy last sufferings; and grant that it may leave on our hearts a holy and lasting impression. May these hours of study be so profitably spent, that I may feel the benefit of them at my death, and praise thee for them in eternity. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy death and passion. Amen.

(*b*) 1 Cor. xv. 55.

C O N.



CONSIDERATION IX.

*The last * Hours of the LORD JESUS.*

‘ (a) **I**N thee, O Lord, do I put my trust,
 ‘ let me never be ashamed: Deliver me
 ‘ in thy righteousness; bow down thine ear to
 ‘ me, and deliver me speedily: Be thou my
 ‘ strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
 ‘ For thou art my rock, and my fortress; there-
 ‘ fore, for thy name’s sake, lead me and guide
 ‘ me. Pull me out of the net that they have
 ‘ laid privily for me: Thou art my strength.
 ‘ Into thine hand I commend my spirit: Thou
 ‘ hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.
 ‘ I have hated those that regard lying vanities;
 ‘ but I trust in the Lord. I will be glad, and
 ‘ rejoice in thy mercy; for thou hast considered
 ‘ my trouble: Thou hast known my soul in ad-
 ‘ versities, and hast not shut me up in the hand
 ‘ of the enemy; thou hast set my feet in a
 ‘ large room.’

The fifth verse of this Psalm, namely, ‘ Into
 ‘ thy hand I commend my spirit,’ are to be
 considered as the key to lead us into the right
 sense of the text; and from these words an at-
 tentive mind may easily infer, that this part of
 the Psalm treats of our ever-glorious Redeemer,
 the Lord Jesus Christ. For as he appropriates
 to himself the twenty-second Psalm, by bor-

* Hours here signify devotions.

(a) Psalm xxxi. 1—9.
 rowing

rowing from it these words which he spoke on the cross, ' My God, my God, why hast thou ' forsaken me ;' so has he likewise appropriated to himself this Psalm, by saying, ' Father, Into ' thy hands I commend my Spirit.' Hence we may conclude, that Christ is introduced speaking here; who in the first verse of this Psalm says, ' In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, let me ' never be ashamed : Deliver me in thy righteousness, &c.' In these words the suffering Jesus speaks; who, in the last moments of his life, here enters on a new pathetic discourse with his Father, and at length gives up the Ghost, in assurance of a joyful resurrection. In this manner the last moments of the crucified Jesus are here described, which we shall consider as an edifying pattern of the last Hours of a dying Christian. In the consideration of this subject, we shall shew,

First, How the Lord Jesus behaved in his last hours.

Secondly, How a dying Christian is to behave in his last hours, and prepare for his approaching death.

I.

As to the account of Christ's last Hours, as prefigured in this Psalm, it contains,

First, His last supplication.

Secondly, His last ejaculation.

First, In his last prayer, which is comprehended

hended in the first four verses of this Psalm, he calls on God for a happy issue of the work of redemption; and places his confidence in his heavenly Father, saying, 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.'

In these words he reminds his Father, that, hitherto in all the storms with which his human nature had been assaulted, he had made HIM his sole refuge, and firmly trusted that he would deliver him from anguish and death, and at length eminently manifest his glory. And as now in the last moments of his life, even whilst the scoffers are crying out, 'He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him', he persisted unshaken in this confidence; so that his heavenly Father could not but lend a gracious ear to the last prayer, which he was now going to offer up to him. On this follow the dying Redeemer's petitions as contained in this Psalm.

The first petition in this prayer is, 'Let me never be ashamed.' The Son of God, in order to glorify his Father, had delivered himself up to reproach and infamy. He had suffered himself, the night before, to be apprehended as a murderer and a rebel, and to be sentenced to death as a blasphemer. Now, he hangs exposed and naked on an accursed cross, as the vilest of malefactors, and is insulted by all ranks of people. Therefore, he had before said to his Father in another Psalm (*b*), 'For thy sake I have borne reproach; Shame hath covered my

(*b*) Psalm lxi. 7,

'face.'

‘ face.’ But in these words he properly deprecates eternal shame and confusion, and prays, that in this hour of darkness, the Father would not withdraw his hand from him, nor give him up to eternal reproach; but that by death he would put an end to the raging waves of abuse and insults, with which he had hitherto been covered; that he would glorify him again after all this mockery and reproach; and that he would bring him forth again with honour from the grave, and so manifest his innocence, that they, who should believe in him might not be confounded in their hope; which would inevitably be the case, if he, the Captain of their salvation, should continue in the grave, and be overcome by death. Thus he also prays in the sixty-ninth Psalm (c): ‘ Let not them that
 ‘ wait on thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be
 ‘ ashamed for my sake; let not those that
 ‘ seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God
 ‘ of Israel.’

The second petition in this prayer is: ‘ Deliver me, [namely, from everlasting reproach
 ‘ and the bands of death] in thy righteousness.’

Our Mediator, by his manifold sufferings, which were soon to terminate in death, had appeased the Divine justice, and made satisfaction to it for the sins of mankind. Therefore he might, with comfort, now appeal to God’s righteousness or justice; and require, that it would deliver him from reproach, justify him

(c) Verse 6.

by

by the resurrection; and, as it were, give him his discharge for the ransom he had paid, by declaring him for ever free from all farther claims and demands. Hence he says, Deliver 'me in thy righteousness,' or as it is in another Psalm (*d*), 'Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness.'

The third petition in the text is, 'Bow down thine ear to me.' Hitherto God, as a just Judge, had as it were turned aside his ear from our Saviour, without attending to his doleful lamentation: Hence he complains in another Psalm (*e*), 'O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.' But now, he prays, that before the period of his life, his Father would favour him with one gracious look; and fully assure him that the prayer, which the great High Priest offered up for himself and all who should believe in his name, with strong crying and tears, might be heard. Being at this instant descended to the lowest degree of abasement, he prays that the Father would incline down his ear to him; and, as the close of his life now drew near, he intreats him that he would 'deliver him speedily,' as it is in the text.

The fourth petition in the text is, 'Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence, [a fortified, impregnable place] to save me.' Our Redeemer, in his sufferings, was given up

(*d*) Ps. xxxv. 24.

(*e*) Ps. xxii. 2, 3.

by his Father to his inveterate enemies. All the powers of darkness discharged their fury on his soul; and many scurrilous tongues with combined malice cried out, while he was hanging on the cross, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' The soldiers called out, 'If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.' Even one of the crucified malefactors joined in the cry, and said, 'If thou be Christ, or the Messiah, save thyself and us.' His confidence in God's assistance being thus assaulted, he prays, 'Save me,' that the slanders of mine enemies, who say that my soul is to expect no help from thee, may be confuted by real fact. And as our Saviour was now destitute of all human and angelic protection, and exposed naked and defenceless to all the assaults of his enemies, he prays that his heavenly Father would be his rock and fortress; that he would raise him up, bring him into safety, and deliver him from all future assaults of death and hell. But to avoid any appearance of complaint against his Father, as if he had been wanting to shew himself his rock and fortress, he subjoins, 'For thou art my rock, and my fortress,' and hast hitherto constantly shewed thyself such: Be pleased farther to continue my strong rock until the end of my life, which now approaches. With this we may compare the Messiah's effusions of gratitude, as they are expressed in another Psalm (*f*): 'I will

(*f*) Ps. xviii. 1, 2.

' love

‘ love thee, O Lord, my strength ! The Lord
‘ is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer :
‘ My God, my strength, in whom I will trust ;
‘ my buckler, and the horn of my salvation,
‘ and my high tower.’

The fifth petition of this prayer is, ‘ For
‘ thy name’s sake, lead me and guide me.’ He
now drew near to the end of his toilsome
journey, when a sudden darkness and night
came upon him. Not only the natural Sun
withheld its light at the Divine command, so
that horrid darkness obscured the whole coun-
try for three hours ; but the light of comfort
and joy was, as it were, eclipsed in his op-
pressed soul ; and now he was immediately to
enter into the gloomy valley of the shadow of
death. He therefore supplicates his Father,
that he would guide him, as the shepherd does
his sheep, and conduct him to the happy end of
his tedious, painful journey. This he requests
of God for his name’s sake ; in the glorifying of
which he had hitherto been occupied in the
work of reconciliation, and whose honour was
inseparably interwoven with the happy issue of
this arduous work. Hence he says (g), ‘ I have
‘ glorified thee on earth ; I have finished the
‘ work which thou gavest me to do. I have
‘ manifested thy name unto men ; and now,
‘ O Father, glorify thou me !’

Lastly, The sixth petition in the text
runs thus : ‘ Pull me out of the net that

(g) John xvii. 4, 5, 6.

‘ they

‘ they have laid privily for me : Thou art my ‘ strength.’ The sufferings of the Messiah are frequently compared in the Psalms to a chased deer, and his enemies to furious hunters, who, by their lies and slanders, had spread their net to catch him, and pleased themselves with this conclusion, viz. When once he is hunted down he will never rise again. Hence the Messiah is represented complaining, ‘ Without cause ‘ they have hid for me their net in a pit, ‘ which, without cause, they have digged for ‘ my soul (*b*)’ Now this net was that horrible accusation alledged by the Jews, That he had blasphemed God. This net, his judges as it were combined to throw over him, by sentencing him to die as a blasphemer in these words: ‘ He is worthy of death.’ Therefore, he now intreats his Father to pluck him out of the net, *i. e.* to manifest to all the world, that he is now no blasphemer; but that he had always honoured his Father, and dedicated his whole life to his glory; and that all the crimes, for which he was indicted in the spiritual and temporal courts of the Jews and Gentiles, were mere falsities and calumnies. To this petition he adds his motive for trusting in, and praying to, his Father: ‘ For thou art my strength;’ thou hast strength and power to tear this net in pieces and deliver me out of it.

These are the six important petitions which, it may be supposed, the dying Messiah sent up

(*b*) Ps. xxxv. 7.

to his Father in the last moments of his life. But here he does not at all pray to be excused from death; but that the Father would so direct the circumstances of it, that his innocence may be manifested, and his Father's name glorified.

Secondly, To these last petitions now succeeded the last ejaculation or commendatory prayer, with which our blessed Saviour concluded his life on the cross. It contains

1. A calm resignation of his soul into his Father's hands.

2. A joyful confidence and assurance of his subsequent exaltation.

1. The calm resignation of his soul into his Father's hands is expressed in these words: 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Our blessed Lord had the power of laying down his life, or soul (*i*). But he knew of no better and safer place to deposit it than in the hands of his dear Father, *i. e.* under his gracious and almighty protection, who has a tender care for all his children, and particularly for his only begotten Son. To the care and protection of his Father he recommends his harrassed spirit, which hitherto had laboured and conflicted for the salvation of mankind. This, as a jewel of inestimable worth, he deposits in the hands of God, in the certain hope of receiving it again on the third day, and re-uniting it with his glorified body.

(*i*) John x. 18.

But our dying Saviour, according to the text in the Psalm, subjoins the motives, which induces him to deliver up his soul into the faithful hands of his Father; and these are derived partly from God, and partly from our Redeemer himself.

The motive, on God's side, was his faithfulness, which Jesus had so richly experienced during his whole life. Hence he says, 'Thou hast redeemed me,' [from all distress which ever befel me in my whole life, and hast promised to raise me from death and glorify me.] 'O Lord, thou God of truth!' Thou wilt infallibly fulfil thy promise; for thou hast said, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: And he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (k).'

The motive derived from our Redeemer himself, for giving up his soul into the hands of God, was his good conscience. For he was sensible that in his heart he had never departed

(k) Isaiah liii. 10, 11, 12.

from God, never sided with his enemies; but, as a true servant of God, and an obedient Son, had performed the whole will of his heavenly Father. Hence he says in the text, ‘ I hate ‘ them that regard lying vanities* ; but I trust ‘ in the Lord.’ This was literally true : For the Lord Jesus, especially in his ministerial office, sufficiently evidenced his abhorrence of the lying vanities, the erroneous doctrines, the false glosses, the traditions, and all the corruption and superstition of the Jewish Doctors at that time. Nay, he was so far from countenancing them, that, about four days before his death (*l*), he had publicly reprimanded and denounced several woes against them for their hypocrisy, &c. On the other hand, he had trusted in the Lord ; he had always faithfully espoused his cause, and performed all his will. Hence he could justly say, ‘ The Father hath not left me alone ; for ‘ I do always those things that please him (*m*).’ Therefore, now in the hour of death, he, without any apprehension or fear, recommends his soul to his paternal care and Almighty protection.

2. The joyful confidence and assurance which our Saviour had of his resurrection and exaltation is thus expressed in the text : ‘ I will be ‘ glad and rejoice in thy mercy ; for thou hast ‘ considered my trouble, &c.’ From these

* Or ‘ superstitious vanities,’ as it is in the old English translation.

(*l*) Matth. xxiii. (*m*) John viii. 29.

words we may learn in general, that the soul of Jesus Christ was, after the afflictive interval of darkness and desertion, again irradiated, comforted, gladden, and perfectly assured of his heavenly Father's love, even before its departure from the body. He therefore rejoices in the goodness and affection of his heavenly Father, of which he adduces the following proofs.

1. 'Thou hast considered my trouble,' namely, with paternal compassion, and readiness to help me.

2. 'Thou hast known my soul in adversities:' Or thou knowest me under the distress and anguish of my soul; and though I hang naked and wounded on the cross as a wretched worm, yet art thou not ashamed of me, but ownest me for thy Son, and already art making preparations to glorify me.

3. 'And hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy.' And though thou hast given me up into the hands of men, yet thou hast not left me shut up in them, but hast taken me again out of their hands into thine own; and thus, at my death, thou hast neither given up my body to the rage of mine enemies, nor my soul to the prince of darkness.

4. 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room.' Thou hast delivered me from oppression and anguish, and by the resurrection hast placed me in a state of consolation and joy, which is here termed a large room.

In

In all these proofs of the Divine goodness the soul of Christ as it were rejoices, just before its departure, from an absolute assurance that his heavenly Father would shew himself tender and affectionate to him, even in his death. Hence he says in another Psalm (n),
' Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory re-
' joiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For
' thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither
' wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see cor-
' ruption.

This is the account of our blessed Saviour's last Hours, and certainly the worth of it is inestimable. For therein are made known to us the most secret thoughts that passed in the heart of our dying Mediator; of which little mention is made in the Evangelical history of the Passion, but they are fully displayed in the Passion-Psalms. For in these Psalms, the Holy Ghost, as it were, opens the heart of our IMMANUEL, and gives us a lively representation of the most secret thoughts and motions which passed in it during his sufferings. What a delightful sight! When in this sacred heart, now near breaking, nothing is seen but a filial confidence, and sure trust in his heavenly Father. All his agonies end in a calm resignation; he closes his life with an affectionate recommendation of his soul into his Father's hands, and a joyful assurance of a glorious resurrection. This is not the exit of a malefactor, or blasphemer;

(n) Psalm xvi. 9, 10.

this is dying like our true Redeemer, who is able to comfort others with the consolation, wherewith he was comforted in his last hours; who knows by experience what it is to die; who presents to God the petitions of his dying brethren; who can have compassion on the agonies of their minds; who has prepared mansions for them in his Father's house, whither he before sent his own departed Spirit; and lastly, who has even acquired for them an assurance, that through death they shall pass into life, and go to his Father, who will deliver them from every pain and every sorrow.

Thus has our blessed Saviour, in the last hours of his life, borne witness of himself; thus has he by his irreproachable behaviour sanctified the last hours of believers; thus has he, by his last prayers, procured a hearing for their last prayers and broken sighs; and, in a word, he has thus acquired for them every thing appertaining to a serene and joyful departure from this world to the heavenly mansions. Therefore, Ye who have received grace to believe, imitate your Saviour; make yourselves betimes acquainted with this mighty Conqueror of the fears of death, that you, with the like resignation and trust in God, may enter the valley of the shadow of death, and deliver up your souls into your heavenly Father's hands. But as for You, who are still so unhappy as to be strangers to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, be persuaded betimes to give yourselves

selves up soul and body to his reasonable service; 'and ye shall find rest unto your souls (o).' Behold, how willingly and chearfully he entered on the most painful death, out of love to your lost souls; that he might acquire for you the Divine Mercy, eternal life, and ever-during happiness. Therefore enter into his blessed fellowship; follow him as your Leader in his god-like life, that, in your last hours, he may likewise be your great example.

II.

From the example given us by our blessed Lord, we are now to shew how a dying Christian is to behave in his last hours, and more carefully prepare himself for his approaching death.

Let it be carefully observed, in the first place, that we do not here intend to shew at large, how one whom God has suddenly laid on a death-bed in the midst of his sins, and in a state of impenitence, shall prepare himself for death. For such a wretched sinner, the example of the penitent malefactor would be more suitable, than that of our dying Saviour, which we are at present considering. However, we shall first briefly consider the case of such an unhappy person.

Such a wretched man standing on the brink of eternity, and having the sentence of death in his

(o) Matth. xi. 29.

conscience; who is just closing his eyes in death, and does not find himself at all prepared to die; whose heart is entirely set upon this world, and yet must immediately leave it, and pass into a world utterly unknown to him; who has drawn God's displeasure on himself by innumerable sins, and is now to stand before his awful tribunal, and hear sentence passed on him: Such a wretched sinner, I say, cannot better employ the last hours of his life, than in endeavouring after a reconciliation with his Creator. In order to this, he is, as far as the violence of his pains, the nature of his distemper, and the dread of death, will permit, to collect all the powers of his mind; to take a retrospect of his whole life, and compare it with the unerring rule of the Word of God; and to add to this fervent prayers that God would be pleased to open his eyes, and, by the light of his grace, to give him a true sight of his unhappy situation.

In thus turning his thoughts on his past life, he will clearly observe these two particulars:

First, That he has done none of those things which he ought to have, done in order to work out his salvation.

Secondly, That he has committed innumerable sins of all kinds in thought, word, and action, against God, his neighbour, and against himself.

On duly considering his former behaviour in this light, it will appear to him to be the greatest madness, and the most brutal stupidity.

pidity. He will acknowledge, that he has acted contrary to the most common rules and maxims of sound reason, by despising the inexpressible felicity freely offered to him in the Gospel ; that he has suffered himself to be diverted, by the most wretched and trifling impediments, from the great duty of making his reconciliation with God ; that perhaps for the sake of petty worldly advantages, which now must for ever cease with death, he has forfeited the real and glorious possessions of a blessed eternity ; and that for a momentary sinful lust, he has precipitated himself in an abyss of torment and misery. In his former behaviour he will observe a dreadful injustice, and abominable ingratitude ; for he has by numberless crimes offended that God who gave him his Being, and who from time to time has showered down innumerable blessings on him ; he has set at nought his worship, has not believed his promises, nor feared his menaces ; and, instead of making any grateful returns of love to such a gracious, bountiful, and benevolent Being, he has shewed himself a stubborn, abandoned rebel. When his former behaviour appears thus abominable to him, he must further call upon God, intreating him that he would work in him a salutary repentance, and godly sorrow. This will induce him to detest his whole former conduct ; sincerely to hate and abhor his sins ; and to be heartily sorry for his base and unworthy behaviour towards God,
whose

whose goodness is infinite, by requiting all his love and accumulated benefits with such unnatural returns of ingratitude.

But the nearer he approaches to the last hour of his life, the more expeditious must he be, amidst the most contrite sentiments of his unworthiness, and of his having deserved the wrath of God, in applying to the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and for his sake, he must humbly implore the forgiveness of all his sins. He must, like a dying malefactor who is just at the point of execution, confess that he is a wretched sinful worm, that deserves to be trodden under foot, and crushed by the Divine justice; and yet place his confidence on the gracious promise of God, by which he has sworn by himself, that he does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. Thus must he persevere hungering and thirsting after mercy, lamenting and bewailing his sins, and praying for remission of them, till faith proves victorious over the accusations of conscience, and the terrors of hell and death; and till he obtains in his soul some comfortable hopes of the grace of God, and the remission of his sins. Such must be the resource and behaviour of him, whom God summons to die in the midst of his sins.

That a sinner, who thus sincerely and heartily labours towards his conversion in his last hours, may be snatched as a brand out of the fire,

fire, is not to be doubted. But alas ! how rare are such examples of late and effectual repentance ? Many who never experienced any thing of repentance or faith, who made religion their jest during their lives, die with a lethargic and insensible conscience, that does not once disturb them on account of their past wicked lives. They depart hence with blinded eyes and a more than Stoical apathy, quite unconcerned, to their eternal perdition. After death they are celebrated by mercenary orators as persons that died serenely and piously, in the full enjoyment of their senses and reason, without any delirious symptoms, and in the fulness of faith in Christ. Many fall into the hands of false comforters, who mistake the natural motions of fear and grief, for the work of conversion ; and if the agonies of death extort from them a short prayer or a few tears, it is immediately construed as a sign of an effectual repentance, and they are soothed with a false hope of future happiness. But many are so suddenly surprised by death in their security, that they are removed from this world to the next, as it were, in a hurricane, before they are aware of their condition. Therefore, O ye unwise, defer not your repentance to such uncertain precarious moments, as are not in your power ! How wise and happy is he, who sometimes regulates the concerns of his soul, and sets his house in order ! so that when he comes to die, he may have nothing to do but, after
the

the example of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to recommend his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father.

But even when a person, who in the days of health has reconciled himself with his Creator, and been fruitful in the practice of good works, and of faith which worketh by love, is seized with his last illness; he will likewise find it necessary to employ in a Christian preparation for death those remaining hours, which God is pleased to favour him with.

Now what this preparation of a dying Christian consists in cannot be better learned than from the example of our blessed Saviour. In this preparation of a dying Believer, a sincere conversion to God is pre-supposed to have been already done in the time of health, the genuineness of which has appeared by the fruits it has produced. But in case any mistrustful doubts arise in the minds of such persons, especially of the weak and scrupulous; they must, before all things, endeavour to remove and clear them up by a careful examination. It will therefore be proper to take a review of the whole ground of their hope, in order to know whether they have built their house on the sand, or on an immoveable rock. It will be likewise proper to examine, whether ever they had a sincere concern about the favour of God, so that they could willingly forego all the earthly advantages of this life in order to obtain it. It will be proper, farther, to search their own heart,

heart, and enquire whether they had a real hatred and abhorrence against every sin, so that they no longer complied with any one sin willingly and deliberately; and, even concerning the common failings and weakneses which still cleave to the best of us, whether they have often in private humbled themselves before God, and been troubled for nothing so much as a want of fervent love to their God and Saviour, who is so worthy of all our affections. If we find these tokens in us, we may be sufficiently convinced of the genuineness of our repentance, and the change of our heart; though we cannot, as some pretend, tell the day and hour of our conversion.

In this case, it is not necessary to renew the whole conflict of repentance, unless God, from particular motives, leads the soul into it, and brings it before his tribunal; either on account of its natural impurity, or of particular bosom-sins, in the mortifying of which it has not shewn proper vigour and resolution; and thus, as it were, by a salutary fire purifies it from much hidden dross and secret sins. Thus it sometimes happens that those persons, who in their life time had the appearance of good Christians, have, on their death-bed, undergone severe conflicts for things which, in the time of life, they looked on as trifles. For, at that important crisis, the accuser of mankind is industrious in bringing forth every thing that
may

may annoy us, and throws many dying persons into dreadful terrors.

But, exclusive of such circumstances, it is sufficient for good Christians if, on their death-bed, they in general sincerely repent of all the sins of their whole life, humbly acknowledge their secret faults, and seek remission of them in the blood of Christ. They ought also, where it is necessary, so far to shew the fruits of their genuine repentance, (if they are conscious of having given offence, or caused trouble to any one by some inadvertent steps) as to endeavour to make amends for it by a sincere acknowledgment, and asking pardon of the party offended; or if they recollect that any person, without any blame on their side, has lived in enmity with them, to use all possible means for a reconciliation, so that before their departure, their neighbour may thus be turned from the error of his ways.

True conversion to God being pre-supposed before a man is laid on a sick-bed, the preparation of a Christian for his approaching death, according to the example of our Saviour, consists in these four particulars.

First, The exercise of prayer.

Secondly, Of faith.

Thirdly, Of Hope, and

Fourthly, Of an entire offering up of the soul to God.

First, In the exercise of prayer. Our blessed Saviour began and finished his last Hours on the
the

the cross with prayer. His first words were, 'Father, forgive them;' and his last words, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.' Therefore prayer is the chief business of a dying Christian. He will easily find great abundance of matter for prayer. For, with regard to what is past, there will be a necessity of humbly imploring his Creator to forgive all his sudden surprises, his numberless failings, weaknesses, and defects. He will likewise find cause to thank the Giver of every good gift, for all temporal and spiritual benefits; for all deliverances, encouragements, warnings, comforts, and salutary chastisements, that have produced the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which he is now going joyfully to reap in eternity. As for what is to come, he will have cause to pray to God partly for others, and partly for himself.

It will behove him to pray for those whom he has inconsiderately offended; that God will be pleased to efface from their minds the impression of such offence. He should pray for those who have hated and persecuted him without a cause; that God will be pleased to convert them, and forgive their trespasses. He ought to pray for those who in his life-time have loved him, and shewed him kindness; that God would reward them in time and eternity. He should pray for his family and relations whom he leaves behind in an evil and perverse world, among so many snares and
seduce-

seducements; that God would be pleased to guide, comfort, bless, and support them. Lastly, he should pray for the whole Church Militant on earth; that its blessed Head may take it under his care and protection, and defend, enlarge, and succour it.

But for himself, he is to pray according to the substance of our Saviour's prayer, contained in the Psalm before us; according to which a dying Christian is to regulate his prayer.

1. Does our Saviour in this prayer say, 'Let me never be ashamed;' so should a Christian borrow these words from him, and likewise pray to God, that the confidence which he has placed in him may not be confounded.

2. Does Jesus Christ further pray, 'Deliver me in thy righteousness;' so may a dying Christian even appeal to the Divine Justice, which is now appeased and satisfied by the blood of the Mediator.

3. Does our dying Saviour say, 'Bow down thine ear speedily;' so a dying Christian, especially in great agonies of mind or violent pains, may, with resignation, pray for the shortening of his sufferings, and for speedy succour from God.

4. Does our dying Saviour say, 'Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me;' so a dying disciple of Christ, seeing his death-bed surrounded by so many spiritual enemies, makes this high Rock his refuge

fuge and house of defence, and prays to be admitted into it.

5. Does Christ pray, saying, 'For thy name's sake lead me and guide me;' so may a dying Christian call upon God, and pray that he will lead him through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death, and bring him into the light of a blessed eternity.

6. Lastly, has the dying Mediator said, 'Pull me out of the net, that they have laid privily for me, for thou art my strength;' so may a dying Christian request the like favour of his heavenly Father. For, as Satan, like an eager hunter, lies in wait for the soul of a dying person, watches every circumstance, and spreads before his sight the net of his former sins, the remembrance of which he revives, and increases the number by many false accusations; he may likewise pray, that the mighty hand of God would draw him out of his net.

But here it may be asked, May not a dying Christian supplicate God for the abatement of his bodily pains, for the recovery of his health, and the lengthening of his life; that he may be a farther benefit to his family, and further endeavour to finish the work of his sanctification? To this I answer, He may indeed make such requests to his Creator, but with an entire resignation to his sacred Will; and in this he has a pattern set him by his Saviour,

who his in prayer on the Mount of Olives, said,
 ' Not my Will, but thine be done.'

Secondly, Such a preparation for death requires the exercise of Faith. Our blessed Saviour, in the next place, thus begins his last prayer: ' In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.' This filial confidence and faith in God he retained to the last moment of his life. Thus must a dying Christian first lay hold of the shield of faith, that he may thereby quench the fiery darts of the wicked. This shield must be held up against all the charges and accusations of satan, with which he, at that time, endeavours to terrify the conscience.

A believer may therefore express himself in this confidential manner: '* The devil has
 " no power over me; it is against Thee only
 " that I have sinned, O thou that pardonest
 " iniquity! What mean these proud claims of
 " satan? It is not he that can prescribe laws
 " to me; he has no share in those whom
 " thou, O Lord, dost love: Depart from me,
 " thou accursed spirit, I know that I am the
 " Lord's. O blessed Jesus, I am thy property;
 " witness thy blood, that thou hast redeemed
 " me from sin! What then can these assaults
 " of satan mean? Why does he threaten me
 " with the terrors of the Divine wrath at the
 " tribunal of God? Come therefore, and as-
 " sert the honour of thy meritorious passion:
 " And since thou hast so dearly purchased me,

* This is part of a hymn, written in the German language.

“ I may rest assured that thou wilt not deliver
“ me into the hands of an accursed enemy.
“ No, my dearest Saviour ; I know that I am
“ thine unalienable portion ; and therefore I
“ smile at all distress and violence. Though the
“ thunders of the law, of hell, and of death,
“ roar against me, and their feeble lightnings
“ flash about me, I know no fear. In life I
“ am thine, and shall continue under thy pro-
“ tection after death.” This is the language
of Faith against the accusations of satan at the
hour of death.

This shield of faith must likewise be opposed
to the terrors of death, that the believer may
be able thus boldly to express himself: “ * To
“ others, death may seem the king of terrors,
“ but to me he wears a milder aspect ; for
“ O thou most precious Fountain of life, who
“ forsakest none who come unto thee ! in thee
“ I rest soul, body, and spirit. Who would
“ be terrified when he is arrived at the end of
“ his journey, and finds himself safe, after passing
“ through roads beset with robbers and assas-
“ sins ? I therefore leave this gloomy wilder-
“ ness with joy, to enter into those eternal
“ mansions which are enlightened by the glory
“ of God, and of which the Lamb is the
“ light (k).”

Now Faith, indeed, embraces every promise
revealed in the gospel ; but more particularly the
promise of the grace of God in Jesus Christ,

* This is part of another German hymn. (k) Rev. xxi. 22.

and of the salvation of those who believe in the name of the Son of God. Therefore it may be of great use,

1. To consider the former mercies, guidances, and deliverances, which we have experienced from God in the course of our lives.

2. To consider the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, by which God has been reconciled, and death disarmed.

3. A devout participation of the holy sacrament, which has often been wonderfully efficacious in strengthening the faith of dying Christians.

Thirdly, To such a preparation for death likewise belongs the exercise of Hope, of which our suffering Saviour has likewise left us a pattern, by saying in the text, 'In thee O Lord do I put my trust!' This hope of a dying Christian is chiefly directed to the blessedness of the future life promised in the gospel; and is grounded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which we are born again to a lively hope of a better life. The more certain this hope is, the more it shews itself, both in an ardent desire to depart and to be with Christ, and in a comfortable joy and alacrity of the mind.

Fourthly and lastly, Such a reparation must be attended with the exercise of an entire Offering of one's self up to God. This consists in calmly resigning ourselves to our wise Creator, and referring all circumstances relating to sickness, life or death, to him; and particularly in
in

in recommending our souls into those mighty and faithful hands, into which the Son of God recommended his Spirit. This fourfold exercise of Prayer, Faith, Hope, and Resignation to God, constitutes the true and immediate preparation of a pious Christian for death.

Therefore consider, all ye who still make it your sole employment to fulfil the lusts of your flesh; all ye who make earthly things, as wealth, honour, ease, and voluptuousness, your supreme felicity, and act as if you had a continuing city here, and were to live in it forever; consider that you are heaping up matter for a miserable death: And if you proceed in this beaten tract, your last moments, unless the grace of God should interpose to awaken your sleeping consciences, will be attended with terrible disquietude, and inexpressible agonies of mind. Alas, how wretched will be your condition when, lifting up your eyes, you see nothing before you but horror, misery, and torture! If you look back to your former life, there all is sin, guilt, and impiety; if you look forward, behold an eternity of agonizing torments and despair! Above you stands an incensed Judge; under you the abyss of hell is opened; and even within you, you will hear the clamours, and sensibly feel the stings, of conscience, the silent witness and accuser of your most secret sins and evil thoughts. Do not flatter yourselves with a vain hope, or think that all may be set to rights with a few broken sighs; think not that

only crying out, God be merciful to me a sinner ! is a sufficient atonement for a life of impiety. Alas ! repentance is too arduous, too important a work, to be thus huddled over. When the body is struggling with the pains of the distemper, and the conscience is at the same time terrified with the wrath of God, and the horrors of death, What strength can be left for such a conflict ? Therefore, while you are in the days of your health, and are not deprived of an ability of sinning ; in the name of Jesus Christ renounce the service of sin, and give yourselves to him who has shed his precious blood on the Cross, and acquired for you a right to a blessed eternity. Settle your account with heaven in time, that all remaining to be done on your death-bed may be, to die tranquil and serene.

As for you who have received the grace of God, be not remiss in your conflict against sin ; be not negligent in perfecting your sanctification, in the fear of God. Think not that you may finish the remainder of your work on your sick bed, and there make up any deficiency in your account, before it is finally closed. Do ye then know how many hours you will have for your preparation on your death bed ? Are ye assured that your distemper will be of such a nature, as to leave you in full possession of your understanding till the last moment ? Habituate yourselves in due time to the performance of those duties, on which your mind will be
em-

employed in your last hours; so that, if the Lord is pleased to grant you time, your last hour may be an hour of triumph; and that if, on the other hand, you should be suddenly surprised by death, yet your souls shall suffer no detriment, but pass calmly into life.

As for you, ye timorous, but believing and upright souls, be not cast down with the apprehension of death, and ask whence should joy come in a dying hour, after such long and severe conflicts with dejection, fear, and dread? God can suddenly roll the weighty stone of the fear of death from your hearts, and comfort you with the hope of a glorious resurrection.

Look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your faith, and obey his divine precepts in the time of your life; and this will be the most effectual means not only for dying happily but joyfully; so that in the hour appointed for your last in the counsel of your heavenly Father, you may say with joy, 'It is finished! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!'

T H E P R A Y E R.

NOW all praise be to thee, O faithful and ever-living Saviour, for sanctifying our last hours by thine, and leaving us therein a glorious pattern for our imitation. Behold! the last moments of our lives are still before us, and none of us know how many steps they have to the end of their journey. Grant there-

fore, to every one a wise and understanding heart, not to put off his preparation for death, till the last moments of his life; but that in the days of health, he may give up his heart to thee, disentangle himself from the accursed snares of sin, and endeavour by thy grace to transplant himself from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light; so that he may know whither to fly for refuge when the terrors of death assault his soul. Those who are already passed from death unto life, and in whom the foundation of a lively hope of a blessed eternity is laid, do thou daily animate, and every morning awaken them with the thoughts, that every day may be their last; so that thus they may always keep their loins girded, and their lamps burning. Graciously stand by them in their last conflict, so that all who attend their death-bed may behold their joy and tranquility, and learn to prepare for such an exit. Grant this for the sake of thy glorious name, Amen.

CONSIDERATION X.

The prodigies which happened at the death of the LORD JESUS.

‘ (a) **A**ND behold, the vail of the Temple
‘ was rent in twain from the top to
‘ the bottom, and the earth did quake, and

(a) Matth. xxvii. 51—56. Mark xv. 38—41. Luke xxiii. 45—49.

‘ the

‘ the rocks rent, and the graves were opened ;
‘ and the bodies of many Saints who slept arose,
‘ and came out of the graves after his resur-
‘ rection, and went into the holy city, and ap-
‘ peared unto many. Now when the centu-
‘ rion who stood over against him, and they
‘ that were with him watching Jesus, saw that
‘ he so cried out, and the earthquake, and those
‘ things that were done ; they feared greatly,
‘ and glorified God, saying, Certainly this was
‘ a righteous man ; truly this was the Son
‘ of God. And all the people that came to-
‘ gether to that sight, beholding the things
‘ which were done, smote their breasts, and
‘ returned. And all his acquaintance, and the
‘ women that had followed him from Galilee,
‘ among whom was Mary Magdalene, and
‘ Mary the mother of James the less, and the
‘ mother of Joses, and Salome, and the mother
‘ of Zebedee’s children, who also, when he
‘ was in Galilee followed him and ministered
‘ unto him, and many other women who
‘ came up with him to Jerusalem, stood afar
‘ off beholding these things.’

In explaining these words we shall consider,
First, The miracles which followed our Sa-
viour’s death.

Secondly, The effect which those miraculous
events had on the spectators.

I.

No sooner had the blessed Jesus bowed his head, and commended his soul into the hands of his Father, than a most extraordinary scene of wonders opened to the unbelieving Jews, to certify that the person who was just departed, was he, whom Isaiah emphatically styles WONDERFUL (*b*). As our blessed Saviour's birth was attended with a glorious apparition of the heavenly Host, which descended from heaven praising and glorifying God; so now at his death, our earth felt strange convulsions, unknown at the death of any person before.

In considering these wonderful phænomena, we shall in general observe the two following particulars.

First, The end and design of them.

Secondly, The signification of these miraculous events.

The first general observation is this: As God in all the extraordinary operations of his omnipotence has always the wisest views; so had he likewise some wise design in exhibiting these wonders. If we reflect a little on the causes and end of them, we may learn,

1. That by these extraordinary phenomena, God intended to awaken the attention of stupid, thoughtless men; and to induce them to con-

(*b*) Chap. ix. 6.

sider the death of this extraordinary person, and enquire into the cause of it.

2. It was God's design, by these miracles, to retrieve the honour of his Son, which had been extremely injured by an ignominious crucifixion, and to give a public testimony of his innocence. The Lord Jesus, when he was nailed to the Cross, would give no proof of his miraculous power, nor deliver himself from suffering death, as his enemies required; but referred the manifestation of his innocence to his Almighty Father. And this amiable temper he had already shewn, when he said, 'I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth (c).' Now this saying of Christ was here verified. For when the Son of God had expired on the Cross in the utmost ignominy and reproach, the Father came forth from his secret sanctuary, and vindicated the honour of his Son who had been numbered among the transgressors, by commanding even the inanimate creation, in an extraordinary manner, as it were to celebrate his obsequies.

3. By these wonderful events, not only our blessed Saviour's innocence, but likewise his Divine Majesty and Glory were eminently displayed. He had been sentenced to die for falsely pretending to be the Son of God, as his infatuated enemies imagined: But now, all Nature by an extraordinary tremor shewed, that the Lord of Nature expired; that God manifested in the

(c) John viii. 50.

flesh was departed ; that the Prince of life was put to death ; and that the Lord of Glory was crucified.

4. This manifestation of the Divine power, which fell out at the crucifixion of our Saviour, is a salutary antidote against the offence of the Cross. To reason, indeed, it may at first sight appear something strange, to believe in one who died on the cross, and to expect eternal life from him. But if a rational man reflects, how signally God himself glorified this crucified Person at his death, it will inspire him with better thoughts of him, and make him look on the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus in a very different light, from that of an evil-doer.

The second general observation relates to the signification of these prodigies ; which are of such a nature, as, at the same time, to have a certain signification, relatively to the unbelieving Jews, and also to believers. They are so particularly ordered by the Divine Wisdom, as very significantly to represent the power and effect of our Saviour's death ; and this will the more plainly appear, on considering each of these prodigies in their order.

The first miraculous event, which followed our Saviour's death, was the rending the veil of the Temple : ' And behold, says the Evangelist (*d*), ' the veil of the Temple was rent in ' twain from the top to the bottom.' In the Temple were two veils, one of which hung

(*d*) Matth. xxvii. 51.

before the door leading into the Sanctuary*, and the other before the door, or opening, into the Holy of Holies, and these were made of azure, purple, and scarlet silk-threads curiously interwoven, and embroidered with the most beautiful flowers and Cherubims. But the latter of these vails only is here spoken of †. If one considers that, according to the testimony even of the Jews themselves, this veil was of a most curious and strong texture like tapestry, and was thirty ells in length and four fingers thick; that it was no old tattered curtain, but a masterly piece of art lately woven, for a new veil was made and hung up in the Temple every year; and lastly, that this strong veil hung in a place where it could not be damaged by the weather; the hand of God must necessarily be acknowledged to have been concerned in the rending of it. What a terror must this sudden and unexpected rent have struck into the Priests, who probably were performing the service in the Sanctuary, lighting the lamps of the golden candlestick, and burning incense! for it was about the time of evening sacrifice. How must they have

* See Josephus's Jewish Antiquities, B. VIII. C. 3.

† This veil, which St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, Chap. ix. v. 3. calls *δευτερον καταπέτασμα*, in the second Temple supplied the place of the partition-wall, which divided the Sanctuary from the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple, mentioned 1 Kings vi. 16. For in the second Temple there were two vails that hung down from two large beams, one towards the Sanctuary, and the other towards the Holy of Holies. Vide LIGHT-FOOT. *Hor. ad. Matth. xxvii. 51. et DEILINGH Obf. Sacr. part. I. Obf. XLV.*

been

been terrified with the sight of the vail, thus rent at once, by which means the Holy of Holies was exposed to the view of the people. For they had hitherto carefully concealed this sacred place from the eyes of all the other Priests by the partition-veil, beyond which only the High Priest was to enter; and that only once a year, on the great day of atonement.

If we now enquire into the signification of this first prodigy, we shall find that

1. With regard to the unbelieving Jews, it was a very melancholy event. Hitherto God had dwelt in the Temple within the Holy of Holies, over the Ark of the Covenant, and there manifested his presence in a peculiar manner. Hence this place was accounted so sacred, that no mortal eye was to look into it; and for this end, God had directed this thick vail to be made. But now, God having rent it himself, and thus, as it were, opened the door of the Holy of Holies, that every one might look into it; he thereby intended to signify, that, from a just indignation and displeasure against the wickedness of his people and their Priests, in putting the Lord of the Temple to death, he would from that time leave this his dwelling (e), and prophane his Sanctuary by giving it up to the eyes and hands of unbelievers *. This

(e) Matth. xxiii. 38. 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate.'

* Eleganter PAULINUS, in *Panegyrico de obitu Celsi pueri*:
Tunc et discusso nudata altaria velo
Amisere sacri religionem adyti.

after-

afterwards came to pass, when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans; for the holy vessels were taken out of the Temple by the soldiers, and exhibited as a public show in the triumph * by Titus Vespasianus, who had conducted the siege of Jerusalem. The night before our Saviour's crucifixion, the High Priest, from an hypocritical zeal, had rent his garments when he heard the Lord Jesus declare himself to be the Son of God; and now, God himself rends that vail with which, while he dwelt in the Holy of Holies, he as it were clothed, and veiled himself, and thereby confirms his Son's declaration, which the High Priest had called blasphemy.

2. But to the faithful this rending of the vail is a joyful type, representing that an entrance was then opened to them into the Sanctuary, which is not made with hands. Hitherto the flesh of Jesus Christ, by the imputation of our sins to him, had hung before it as a vail. But when this vail was rent at the separation of his soul and body by death, and Jesus Christ, the true High Priest, had himself with his own blood entered into the Holy Place, *i. e.* into heaven; the way to the Throne of Grace is cleared of all obstacles, heaven is laid open, and the cover-

Ut Monstraretur vacuandum Numine templum,

Et fore ab hostili sancta profana manu.

Quod duce Romano docuit post exitus ingens,

Everfus templo, civibus, urbe, sacri.

* Vide HARDIANUM RELANDUM, de *spoliis templi Hierosolymitani*.

ing

ing which hung before the mysteries of the Levitical worship is removed * (*f*). The church-militant on earth, which was prefigured by the Sanctuary, and the church-triumphant in heaven, the Antitype of the Holy of Holies, are now united with each other; the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, namely, the ceremonial law, together with the whole Levitical oecomony, is thrown down. Therefore the Apostle thus speaks to all those whose hearts are rent with true repentance: ‘ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (*g*).’ These were the glorious mysteries prefigured by this wonderful event.

A pious Christian, attentively meditating on this remarkable incident, may very justly cry out, I thank thee, O my Saviour, who, for my good, hast suffered the vail of thy flesh which hung, as it were, before the Divinity within thee, to be rent; so that through thee, my Mediator, I can

* Scinditur velum vetus, ut Ecclesia nova fidei suæ vela suspendat. Synagogæ velamen aufertur, ut religionis internæ mytheria revelato mentis cernamus obtutu. AMEROSIUS in Luc. xxiii.

(*f*) Isaiah xxv. 7.

(*g*) Heb. x. 19, 20, 21, 22.

now not only look into the heavenly Sanctuary with the eye of faith, but likewise through thee am enabled even to enter into it, and with confidence approach the Throne of Grace. O my Redeemer, I honour the day of thy death, as the day of my atonement! I rejoice that in thee I have a merciful High Priest, who, with his own blood, has entered into the Holy of Holies, and accomplished the work of eternal redemption. Stretch forth thy mighty hand, and from the top to the bottom rend all the coverings of hypocrisy and wickedness, which thou findest before my heart, and which would preclude thine entrance into it. But, as a thick veil or covering of many prejudices still hangs before the eyes and hearts of that wretched nation that crucified thee, and among whom thou didst take the human nature upon thee; be pleased to rend those veils, that they may see in thee the accomplishment of all the shadowy types of the Law, and behold thy glory with open face.

The second prodigy, which happened at our Saviour's death, was a violent earthquake, mentioned only by St. Matthew, who says, 'The earth did quake,' or was moved. How far this violent shock extended cannot be determined with any precision*. It is, however, certain,

* PLINIUS *inquit*, Maximus, terræ, memoriâ mortalium, extitit motus, Tiberii Cæsaris principatu, duodecim urbibus Asiæ unâ nocte prostratis. *Hist. Nat. Lib. II. Cap. 84.* Adde TACITI *Annal. Lib. II. C. 47.* Sed temporum tamen rationes non conveniunt.

that it was felt in Judea, and that it shook Mount Golgotha with the neighbouring parts, and the foundations of the city of Jerusalem, so that it reeled like a drunken man (*b*). Thus the earth, and perhaps the whole globe, gave extraordinary * tokens of its sympathy with its Creator, who was so terribly injured, and of its detestation of the atrocious crime then committed by the Jews. Therefore as the sun, by God's interposition, had before withdrawn its brightness, that it might not give light to the profligacy of the bold blasphemers, who stood round our Saviour's cross; so now, also, the earth, by its violent convulsions, indicates that it trembled at the impiety of those wretches who crucified HIM, by whose majestic voice on Mount Sinai the earth had been formerly moved (*i*), as it is now shaken a second time by the loud cry, with which he gave up the Ghost.

But as to the signification of this second prodigy, it prognosticated no good to the Jewish nation. By this earthquake, God not only manifested his anger at their wickedness, which had been carried to its highest pitch in the crucifixion of his Son; for the effects of God's wrath are in Scripture represented under the

(*b*) Isaiah xxiv. 20.

* Rectè enim hunc terræ motum pro planè extraordinario et supernaturali habet CASP. SAGITTARIUS, in *Harm. Hist. Passionis*, p. 1025. Add. CASP. POSNERUM, in *disputatione, de Singularibus, ac Miraculis quibusdam, quæ morte Christi in natura acciderunt*.

(*i*) Exod. xix. 18. Heb. xii. 26.

image of an earthquake (*k*); but he also secretly intimated to them, that both their religion and polity should be shaken by violent concussions, should be removed from their place, and be utterly destroyed and abolished, as St. Paul observes in the Epistle to the Hebrews (*l*).

On the other hand, this earthquake was an emblem of the blessed motions to be caused in those hearts which had hitherto been carnally minded, by the preaching of the crucified Jesus, especially among the Gentiles (*m*). As the mountains skipped, and the earth trembled before the Lord (*n*), formerly at the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt; so this earthquake shews, that now the true redemption of mankind from the hands of all their enemies is accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ.

Alas! may a pious Christian say, How am I ashamed, that my heart remains so unmoved at the consideration of my Saviour's death, when the earth itself trembled and shook on the account of it! By the power of thy death, O blessed Jesus, kill in me all earthly and sinful inclinations. May this awful truth, That the Son of God died for my sins, affect me with a holy trembling and a salutary dread at the great

(*k*) Joel iii. 16. Ps. xviii. 7. 'The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and the earth shall shake. The earth shook and trembled; the foundations also moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth'.

(*l*) Chap. xii. 26, 27.
'all nations, &c.'

(*m*) Hagai, ii. 7, 8. 'I will shake

(*n*) Ps. cxiv. 6, 7.

severity of God's justice, which appears so conspicuously in this instance. But, in the consideration of this comfortable truth, namely, That by thy death I am reconciled with God, fill my heart with holy emotions, and grateful love. Grant that I may exult for joy, on account of the great salvation obtained for me by thy death, and at the noble freedom in which I am placed by the redemption thou hast wrought.

The third prodigy that attended the death of Christ is related in these words: 'The rocks rent.' This, in some measure, was an effect of the preceding earthquake. The country about Jerusalem was very mountainous and rocky; hence it is said in the Psalms, 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem (*o*).' Now these rocks and hills were so shaken by the earthquake, that huge masses of some of them tumbled down from the summits into the vallies; others were rent with large clefts and fissures. Probably, this miracle displayed itself first on that rock where Christ was crucified, and was afterwards propagated to the adjacent parts, in which, to this very day, are seen very wide chasms and fissures in the rocks, as memorials of this prodigy*.

This rending of the rocks, with regard to the unbelieving Jews, was likewise a token of God's anger at their wickedness, for 'his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown

(*o*) Pf. cxxv. 2.
to Jerusalem.

* See Maundrel's Travels from Aleppo

down by him (*p*). These rent rocks put the Jewish people in mind, that the earth only waited the order of its Creator to open its mouth, and swallow up the rebellious crew of the enemies of Christ, as it formerly had swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (*q*). It reminded them of the Lord Jesus's pathetic-speech to the women of Jerusalem, when he was led up Mount Golgotha; in which he had predicted to the Jewish nation such calamitous times, that in their despair they would say to the mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us!

But, at the same time, this rending of the rocks was an emblem of the conversion of the Gentiles. For, by the preaching of the cross, the very hardest hearts, hearts obdurate as a rock were rent and made contrite; and of this, the first specimen was seen in the Roman Centurion and the rest, who stood watching Jesus by the Cross (*r*).

Here may a true believer say, Alas! my heart has by nature all the hardness of a rock; may it more and more be rent by the salutary impressions of God's holy Spirit, that he may find admittance therein. And as I see about me so many other flinty hearts, on which the powerful arrows of thy Word make no impression, O my Saviour, be merciful likewise to them; and may they by the power of thy death be also rent and bruised!

(*p*) Nahum i. 6. (*q*) Num. xvi. 31. (*r*) Matth. xxvii. 54.

The fourth prodigy that fell out at our Saviour's death was the opening of the graves : ' And the graves were opened.' The sepulchres of the opulent Jews were mostly hewn in rocks ; so that when the rocks were rent from each other, many graves also were opened *. However, this was absolutely a distinct miracle from the former. For the Divine omnipotence, which had displayed itself by rending the rocks, also wrought on particular places where certain Saints were buried, and opened their graves.

With this opening of the sepulchres another miracle was connected ; which properly came to pass on the morning, when our Saviour arose from the dead. For, by the power of Christ, ' many bodies of Saints who slept arose, and ' came out of the graves after his resurrection, ' and went into the holy city, and appeared ' unto many (†). ' Who these Saints were, whose graves are thus opened, is only a matter of probable conjecture. They are supposed to be, in general, such devout persons as, in their life-time, had waited for the coming of the Messiah, and had wished to see his days ; and now their wishes were accomplished even in their

* Aliis etiam terræ motibus sepulchra nonnunquam fuisse aperta ; lapidibus, qui speluncarum orificium occludebant, excussis ; GROTIUS probat. Ita quum in insula Rhodo terra vehementi motu concuteretur, monumenta disrupta esse, & mortuos excussos, ARISTIDES his verbis narrat: *μνηματα ἀνεργήγυντο*, & paulò post : *ἔξω μὲν τὰ μνηματα ἀνεργήπτε τῆς σεισμῆς*.

(†) Matth. xxvii. 52, 53.

death. This honour may have been conferred, in the first place, on the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the two last of whom had, at their death, left a particular charge, that their bones should not be buried in Egypt, where they died, but in the land of Canaan (*u*).

Next to these, this favour may have been conferred on some of the Prophets *, who had prophesied of the Messiah, and whose sepulchres the Jews had hitherto beautified. Lastly, among these Saints who arose, there might be some who were lately departed, as Simeon, Hannah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, &c. who must have been known by those to whom they appeared. These graves were now opened by the death of our blessed Lord, as a proof of the truth of what he had before asserted, saying, (*x*) 'The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice' [of the Son of God.] St. Matthew says, that these Saints came out of the graves, and made their appearance to many in Jerusalem after our Saviour's resurrection. Therefore, it is probable, that they were not restored to life till the morning when Christ rose from the dead, who was to

(*u*) Gen. xlvii. 29, 30. Chap. l. 24, 25.

* IGNATIUS in Ep. ad *Magnesium* §. IX. προφηται, μαθηται, αιτες, τω πνευματι ως διδασκαλον αυτον προσεδύκεν, και δια τητο, ου δικαιως ανεμεινον, παρων ηγειρεν αυτους εκ νεκρων. *Prophetæ, quum discipuli Christi essent, spiritu ipsum ut Doctorem expectabant, & propter hoc is, quem justè expectârant, suscitavit ipsos ex mortuis.*

(*x*) John v. 28.

be the first-fruits of them that slept *(y)* and are to rise to life everlasting. It is therefore supposed by some learned men, that these Saints were restored to life in the instant when Christ expired on the cross, and when their graves were opened they came out of them; but that it was not till after Christ rose from the dead, that they went into the holy city and appeared unto many, as witnesses of the resurrection.

This miraculous opening of the graves is, on one side, a reproach to the Jews for having put Him to death, whose coming all the Saints of their own nation had so ardently longed for. But, on the other hand, Believers may be convinced by it, that Jesus Christ has not only put an end to the bondage of the Law, and brought the prisoners out of the pit *(z)*; but that he has likewise, by his death, destroyed the power of Death and hell *(a)*; that, one day, he will again open the graves of all Saints departed under the old and new Covenant; and that he will bring them forth alive, glorify them, and introduce them into the heavenly Jerusalem.

Here may a devout soul say, O my Saviour, the longer I abide by thy Cross, the higher thoughts I entertain of thy sacred Person. The first prodigy after thy death teaches me, that thou art the real High Priest who is entered with his blood into the Holy of Holies. The

(y) 1. Cor. xv. 20.

(z) Gal. iii. 23. Zach. ix. 11.

(a) Heb. ii. 14.

second and third miracle assure me, that thou art the author of Nature, which here sympathised with thee. The fourth prodigy convinces me that thou art the Prince of life, and the Conqueror of death; that thou canst demolish the marks of triumph which he has set up among mankind, force his strong prison, deprive him of his spoils, and rescue his captives. Therefore, in the first place, rouse me from my carnal security; call me forth from the grave of my sins, in which I naturally lie; roll away the stone which shuts it up; and place in my heart a lively hope, that, on the day of thine appearance, when thy enlivening voice shall pervade all the mansions of the dead, and when all the spoils of death shall be torn from him, I also may come forth from my grave, and behold thy refulgent countenance in glory.

II.

We come, in the second place, to consider the effect which these miraculous events had on the spectators. Among these spectators were,

First, The Roman Centurion, who commanded the party of soldiers at the crucifixion of our Lord, and now stood opposite to the cross with his men watching Jesus. This officer had taken particular notice, that the death of Jesus was followed by such unheard of agitations throughout all Nature, as if it lay in the agonies of death.

Now

Now the effect which the sight of these miracles had on him, as the Evangelist tells us, was as follows :

1. ' He feared greatly.' His heart was also shaken, and inspired with a holy fear of God, whose omnipotent hand was so manifestly visible in these extraordinary phenomena. He began to reflect with horror on what he and his soldiers had been doing ; that they had injured a person who, even in his death, had more power than the combined force of all the living, and whose last voice shook the foundations of the earth.

2. ' He glorified God.' He praised the God of Israel, and acknowledged that he does great and wonderful things ; that he can darken the sun, shake the earth, rend the rocks, open the graves and cause them to eject the dead ; things infinitely beyond the power of all the heathen deities.

3. He acknowledges the crucified Jesus to be a righteous man, and the Son of God. For, according to St. Luke, he said, ' Certainly ' this was a righteous man ; ' but according to St. Matthew and Mark, his words were, ' Truly this man was the Son of God.' In this acknowledgment or confession of Christ, we may observe two degrees of illumination. In the first place, from the extraordinary circumstances attending our Saviour's death, he acknowledges his innocence. He declares that he was a righteous and good man, innocent of
all

all those crimes which had been laid to his charge, and consequently most undeservedly sentenced to, and punished with, death. But from this first step, the Spirit of God leads him farther; for he also acknowledges the Divine glory of Christ. He asserts that this innocent, righteous Man was, in a particular manner, related to the Deity; and that he did not only, according to the accusation of the Jews, pretend to be the Son of God, but that he actually was the Son of the most high God. This he affirms in the strongest manner: 'Certainly this ' was a righteous man; truly this was the Son ' of God.' Thus God confirms by this Pagan officer the declaration, which Christ had made before the Sanhedrim, and for which he had been condemned as a blasphemer. As the lips of the Jewish Priests, which were ' to keep ' the knowledge of the Messiah (a), foamed out blasphemies against Christ, God caused his glory to be proclaimed by the mouth of a Pagan soldier, for a presage that now he would make Him known among the Gentiles, whom the unbelieving Jews had rejected.

Secondly, The Pagan soldiers, who were under the command of this Centurion, and, in all appearance, had hitherto mocked Christ and insulted him in Pilate's hall of judgment, were among the spectators. The effect these miracles had on them was, that they also were afraid and terrified; for St. Matthew says,

(a) Mal. ii. 7.

' When

‘ When the Centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly.’ Hence it is evident, that not only the commanding officer felt such emotions in his heart ; but that his example made an impression on the soldiers under his command, whose stony hearts the Almighty likewise rent, and kindled in them a light to discern the innocency and dignity of Jesus. This was not merely the effect of the prodigies which they saw, but likewise of our Saviour’s gracious intercession which they had likewise heard, when he cried, ‘ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;’ and which thus began already to be accomplished on Mount Golgotha.

Thirdly, There were Jews among the spectators, the greatest part of whom stood about the cross out of mere curiosity, either reviling Christ, or gazing on him. Concerning these St. Luke makes the following observation : ‘ And all the people that came together to that sight,’ where God so suddenly altered the scene, and so unexpectedly glorified the abased and derided Jesus, ‘ beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.’ In this account two particulars are specified.

1. They smote their breasts. That action did not proceed only from wonder and amazement ; but expressed their concern, their grief,
and

and repentance for what they had done. They were greatly troubled that they had suffered themselves to be so far misled by their rulers, as to reject this person, and had offered him so many injuries, indignities, and abuse. Then was fulfilled the saying of the blessed Jesus (*b*), 'When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He,' *i. e.* the Messiah, who was promised to your fathers.

2. 'They returned.' By this expression is meant not only that they returned to Jerusalem, to their homes, to reflect farther on these things by themselves; but likewise in some measure from their evil ways, into the good way which Jesus had preached unto them. All these people, we may be sure, were not of the same temper and disposition. In some this was no more than a transitory fright and fleeting emotion, which soon vanished again out of their minds, without bringing forth any fruit. On the minds of others the impression was deeper, and consequently had a better effect. But it is remarkable, that we read not a word of the chief Priests, Pharisees, or Rulers of the people, being in the least moved at these wonderful phenomena. We do not hear of their beating their breasts, and returning. These hardened hypocrites 'regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands' (*c*). To avoid the appearance of having acted wrong, they would not own the God

(*b*) John viii. 28.

(*c*) Isaiah v. 12.

of Israel to be in the right; and even after the death of our blessed Saviour, they exclaimed against him as a deceiver (*d*).

Fourthly, Among the spectators were also some of Christ's followers of both sexes. St. Luke observes, that 'all his acquaintance were there, and the women that followed him from Galilee.' St. Matthew and St. Mark particularly specify Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less, and the mother of Joses, and Salome, and the mother of John and James the Elder, the sons of Zebedee. The last of these, together with her sons, had declared, that they would also drink the cup which Jesus was to drink of (*e*). Therefore she was now led by her love for him, to attend our Saviour to the last moment of his life, and by a sensible compassion must have tasted something of the bitterness of his sufferings and of his last agony. Of all these persons the Evangelists observe.

1. 'That they stood afar off.' Probably they could not with any conveniency come nearer, on account of the croud; but in this distance that prophecy in the Psalms (*f*) was likewise accomplished: 'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me (*g*).'
It is farther said of them

(*d*) Matth. xxvii. 63.

(*f*) Ps. xxxviii. 11.

(*e*) Matth. xx. 22, 23.

(*g*) lxxxviii. 8.

2. That

2. That they were looking on ; and consequently were witnesses both of the death of Christ, and of the miracles that attended it. Thus was the blessed Seed of the Woman, at his death, surrounded with devout women.

No mention is made by the Evangelists of the effect which these prodigies had on their minds. They had no occasion to beat their breasts, and to lament that they had injured the blessed Jesus. Their consciences witnessed better things to these devout women. Therefore, though the earth shook and trembled under their feet ; yet they could lift up their heads with confidence. But it is very probable that a violent conflict of hope and despair, of faith and unbelief, passed in their souls. They saw Jesus die of whom they had hoped that he was to redeem Israel, and whom they had accompanied to Jerusalem with a persuasion that the kingdom of God would immediately appear (*b*). At this instant, the idea of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah must have been extinguished in their souls, and their hope of seeing it vanished at our Saviour's death. But their faith might derive a powerful encouragement from the miracles, with which God honoured this melancholy catastrophe. Here all Nature, as it were, cried aloud in behalf of the innocence of Jesus, which had been oppressed by the many false accusations and calumnies of the Jewish rulers. What an

(*b*) Luke xix. 11.

impression must it have made on them, to see all the people beating their breasts and returning; and to hear even the Roman officer and the soldiers publicly owning the crucified person to be the Son of God? They concluded from hence, that they had not followed Jesus, and ministered unto him with their substance in vain, and that possibly the matter might have quite another issue than his enemies expected. They saw how suddenly their invidious joy was interrupted, by these dreadful prodigies at the death of Jesus; and concluded that God could still do greater things than these, and consequently that they might farther hope in his goodness.

We shall conclude this consideration with the following inferences from what has been said on the subject.

I. A godly fear is usually the first effect of a serious consideration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

Thus the spectators of our blessed Saviour's death beat their breasts for trouble and remorse; and when our evil consciences accuses us, it can be no otherwise with us. When a person reflects, that his sins have been the cause of the crucifixion of the glorious Son of God, what violent emotions must it not awaken in his heart? Such emotions will mortify in us all natural pride, arrogance, and self-love. Hence we learn to humble ourselves before God, and stand in awe of his just displeasure. By this the foundation of repentance is laid; so that after-

afterwards the sufferings of Christ are viewed as a mirror of grace and felicity. But we are not to give over the work of conversion at these legal fears; which, it is to be apprehended, was the case of many of the spectators of our Saviour's passion. We must proceed farther, and dwell in contemplation on the affecting subject, till the heart is molified and changed, so as to conceive a hatred and abhorrence for sin.

2. As God has glorified his Son after his great abasement; so when his children have fought the good fight of faith, and endured sufferings, he will bring them also to glory.

Who would have conceived that our blessed Lord, while he was hanging on the Cross covered with blood and reproach, would have received such an encomium as soon as he expired, and that from a Pagan soldier? 'Certainly 'this was a righteous man, truly this was the 'Son of God!' Yet such was the issue to which the providence of God brought this tragical affair. Thus, in the fight of affliction we must continue true to the end. Such a conduct will also make a happy impression on others; and even those who in our life-time have hated, mocked, and persecuted us, will, at our death, bear witness that we have faithfully served our Lord and Saviour, and were his true disciples.

3. It is then only that the death of Christ produces its true effect in us, when it has kindled the Spiritual life in our souls.

The spiritual life is, indeed, properly one of the fruits of the resurrection of our Lord : Hence St. Peter observes, ' That we are begotten ' again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection ' of Jesus Christ from the dead (*a*). ' However, the foundation of it is already laid in Christ's triumphant death. Thus, in the instance before us, at the death of our blessed Saviour, every good principle, which hitherto seemed dead in the hearts of the spectators, received new life ; and this life manifested itself by the tongues of these men, which proclaimed the innocence and glory of Jesus, by the hands which beat their breasts, and by the feet with which they returned a better disposition. The death of Christ must still have this blessed effect in us, viz. of imparting to us a new life, which will manifest itself in all the members of our bodies ; so that they will no longer be given up to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but to the service of him who died and rose again for us.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Faithful Saviour, we praise thee, who didst even on thy Cross begin to fulfil thy word ; namely, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. O that it may please thee also to draw those who are farthest from thee, and still harbour a sinful contempt

(i) 1 Pet. i. 3.

of thy reproach ! Teach them to acknowledge, that thy ignominious death is the only means by which our death must be overcome, and the guilt of our sins blotted out. Incline all our hearts to contemplate thy meritorious death ; and grant that we may, in due time, enjoy the precious fruits of it. Rend the veil of our prejudices, shake our obdurate and refractory hearts ; and open the grave of our sins, that we may come forth to a new life. Grant that we may beat our breasts, as a token of godly sorrow, and return from our evil ways. Thus, O blessed Jesus, may every thing which passed outwardly at thy death, be fulfilled within us. Have mercy upon us, O thou Lamb of God, and hear us for the sake of thy meritorious death and passion ! Amen.

CONSIDERATION XI.

*The last indignity offered to the body of the
LORD JESUS on the Cross.*

‘ (a) **T**HE Jews, therefore, because it
‘ was the Preparation, that the bodies
‘ should not remain upon the Cross on the Sab-
‘ bath day, [for that Sabbath day was an high
‘ day,] besought Pilate that their legs might be
‘ broken, and that they might be taken away.
‘ Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs

(a) John xix. 31, 37.

‘ of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side; and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that this Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken; and again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.’

In these words, St. John, who was an eyewitness of the transaction, relates the last insult done to the body of his Lord and Master, while it hung on the Cross. In this narrative we have an account of a two-fold indignity offered to the body of Jesus.

First, One, which was not put in execution.

Secondly, Another which, by the Divine permission, was committed on it for good and wise ends.

1.

The first indignity, which was designed against the sacred body of our Lord, was the breaking of his legs: But though such an indignity was intended by the soldiers; yet it was averted by a higher Power.

First,

First, That this indignity was intended, we may learn from the request of the Jews to Pilate, namely, That the legs of those who were crucified might be broken, and that their bodies might be taken away (*b*). Thus the Jews, by whom we are here to understand the Rulers, chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders, proposed to treat the body of the Lord Jesus with such indignity. As for the Jewish people, the miracles which attended the death of the Lord Jesus had so affected them, that they were gone away beating their breasts. Even the very Roman Centurion, who commanded the party of soldiers that watched the Cross, had together with his soldiers glorified God, and publicly acknowledged, that the crucified Jesus was not only a righteous Man, but the Son of God. The Doctors and rulers of the Jewish people still continued obdurate and insensible. The earth had been shaken under their feet, and the rocks were rent; but their stony hearts were still unmoved, unbroken, and without the least apparent sign of sorrow, or awe of the Divine Majesty.

This is indeed a most melancholy sight. But let us withdraw our eyes from those hardened miscreants, and turn them inwardly on our own hearts. How often has the death of Jesus Christ been set forth to us? How often has our blessed Saviour, extended on the Cross, been so represented to us, as if he had been

(*b*) John xix. 31.

crucified among us? But are our obdurate hearts softened or broken by the representation? Is our stubborn evil disposition overcome? In the last Consideration, the prodigies which attended the death of Christ, have been illustrated and explained; but what is the effect and impression of them on the reader's mind? Has thy carnal heart shook before God, on hearing that the earth shook at thy Saviour's death? Hast thou been so moved by it, as to beat thy breast; and seriously to resolve on returning from the ways of injustice and covetousness, of uncleanness and intemperance, of pride and anger?

The Jews therefore now applied to Pilate with a double request. They desired of him,

1. That the crucified bodies might be taken down from the Cross before sun set, and

2. That their legs might be broken, in order to hasten their death; since it was acting contrary to the laws, as well as the dictates of humanity, to take those alive from the Cross, who had been condemned to die.

That the reader may better understand the nature of this request of the Jews, it is necessary to observe, that those malefactors who were crucified often died a very lingering death; so that it was not an uncommon thing for them to remain alive on the Cross two or three days, till at last they perished by hunger, or were smothered by smoke, [for which purpose wet materials were burnt under the Cross] or were devoured by wild beasts. Here the Jews proposed

proposed the breaking of their legs, as the means of hastening the death of the crucified. The breaking of the legs of slaves was not an unusual punishment among the Romans; which was done by laying the legs on an anvil, and breaking them in two with hammers. When this inhuman punishment was inflicted on the crucified malefactors, the wood of the Cross to which their feet were nailed served instead of the anvil; and these violent and painful fractures soon brought on their death. By this cruel treatment, they hastened the death of these unhappy malefactors; but, at the same time, their pain was increased to a very high degree by it. Such an excruciating torture the Jewish rulers, who probably had not yet been informed of Christ's death, would willingly have added to those, which had already been inflicted on the blessed Jesus through their means: For they besought Pilate that His bones might be broken on the cross, as well as those of the two malefactors.

But as these hypocrites had before prostituted their religion, by making it a cloke for their wickedness; so they likewise now alledged to Pilate, That the day of the preparaion for that Sabbath which was one of their most solemn festivals was at hand; and that it would be profaned, if the unclean bodies of the criminals should be suffered to hang on the cross on that high day.

How great was their accursed hypocrisy! They would not profane the Sabbath; and yet they had put to death the Lord of the Sabbath (*c*), and profaned the sanctuary of Israel, as the Messiah is styled by the prophet (*d*). They would not have the sun set on the bodies of the executed criminals, because it was contrary to the (*e*) law; and yet they suffer the sun to go down on their detestable wrath and inveterate malice against the blessed Jesus. This notorious instance of vile hypocrisy should awaken in us all an eternal abhorrence of that vice, which affects a great zeal for the externals of religion, but makes no account of the essential part of it.

Secondly, This indignity of mutilating the body of Jesus, which the Jews intended, was prevented by Divine providence. After Pilate had given orders that this request of the Jews should be complied with, two soldiers went up to the Crosses, and, with iron bars or hammers, broke the legs of the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus. Hence the penitent outwardly fared no better, than the impenitent thief. They both felt the cruel blows, and both expired in dreadful pangs and convulsions. To the Soul of the penitent malefactor our blessed Lord had promised Paradise; but his body, which had been the instrument of his crimes, was to receive its deserts.

(*c*) Luke vi. 5.

(*d*) Isa. viii. 14.

(*e*) Deut. xxi. 23.

He

He was crucified in the flesh; but his soul was preserved. Hence he probably distinguished himself from his abandoned fellow-sufferer by a composed patience, and rejoiced in his heart when he considered, that however painful this hastening of his death was, it would forward his passage into Paradise.

The soldiers, having now dispatched the two malefactors, approached the Cross of Jesus, with an intent of putting an end to his life also, by breaking his legs. May we all draw near to the Lord Jesus with a better intention! Let us approach his Cross with a broken and contrite heart, that we may rejoice in his salvation, and be upheld with his free Spirit (*f*).

But the soldiers, observing that Jesus was already dead, which they might easily perceive by the change of his complexion, the cessation of all motion, and his head bowed down to his sacred bosom; 'They did not, saith St. John, break 'His legs. 'Now as the intent of this additional punishment was to put an end to the criminal's life; when they found that Jesus was already dead, there was no occasion for expediting his death by breaking the legs; thus, by omitting it, they acted agreeably to their orders.

But in this transaction, we must above all things have an eye to the hand of God, by which the hands of these soldiers were withheld from committing such an outrage on his

Son's body. God would not suffer our Saviour's legs to be broken for the following reasons.

First, That it might be manifest, that the sufferings and death of our Redeemer did not proceed from the will and insolence of his enemies; but that he himself had power voluntarily to lay down his life, before any one took it from him (*g*).

Secondly, That it might appear, that the blessed Jesus, though he was numbered among the transgressors or malefactors, was not of that class. Therefore his heavenly Father caused him to be distinguished from the two malefactors, after his death; since his bones were not broken, and he was honourably buried, neither of which was the case of those who were crucified with him.

Thirdly, That the Scripture might be fulfilled, which, as cited by the Evangelist, says, 'A bone of him shall not be broken.'

These words refer,

1. To the type of the Paschal Lamb; concerning which it is said in Scripture (*b*), 'Thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad, out of the house, neither shall ye break a bone thereof.' From this intimation of the Holy Spirit, here quoted by St. John, it is plain, that the chief view of that Divine ordinance was to prefigure this circumstance of our Saviour's passion, as it was a type of his great sacrifice.

(*g*) John x. 18.

(*b*) Exod. xii. 46.

2. We are hereby referred to a passage in the Psalms (*i*), where it is said of a particular righteous servant of the Lord, 'That many
' are his afflictions; that the Lord delivereth
' him out of them all; and lastly, that he will
' keep all his bones, so that not one of them
' is broken;' and preservation was to be a pledge of his approaching resurrection. These words cannot be applicable to every righteous and pious man; for many godly persons have experienced the contrary. But if we interpret the words as a prophecy concerning Christ, which the context will very well bear, we may here see the literal accomplishment of them. The following words in the twenty-first verse of this Psalm are likewise applicable to our Saviour's enemies: 'Evil
' shall slay the wicked [Jews,] and they that
' hate the righteous [Jesus] shall be desolate;' they who called out, his blood be upon us, &c. shall be punished with ruin and desolation. Let us hence deduce the following truths.

1. He, who once gives himself up a servant to sin, will be continually incited by it to commit greater sins.

The enemies of the blessed Jesus were not satisfied with seeing him fastened to the cross; they would not rest till he was actually dead. Their inhuman cruelty was not satisfied though his flesh had been bruised and torn by the scourges and blows; but they solicited the

(*i*) Psalm xxxiv. 19, 20.

268 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

Governor, that his bones also might be fractured, the better to compass what they ardently wished, namely, that he should lie down, and rise up no more (*k*). Thus they could not restrain their impotent rage against the innocent; though the sun had, as it were, hid his face at the sight of their past wickedness, and the earth had shook and trembled under their feet. Thus, a man is deprived of all his freedom by sin if he suffers it to get the dominion over him; and he becomes a slave of the devil, and a blood-thirsty beast of prey, so that every spark of humanity is gradually extinguished in him. Let us therefore resolutely oppose the first beginnings of sin, and tread under foot the least spark of it that appears, lest it should break out into a flame to the destruction of body and soul.

2. Whoever judges of a man's spiritual state from outward appearances will be frequently mistaken.

The converted malefactor, as we have already observed, suffered the same painful cruelty as his impenitent companion; and yet there was a very great difference between those two persons. For one of them was a friend of Christ, the other his enemy and reviler; one was transplanted from the Cross into Paradise, the other was cast into an abyss of misery. Thus it may frequently happen, that two persons may be involved in the same misfortune, between whose

(*k*) Psalm xl. 8.

inward spiritual circumstances there is a great disparity. One may be a faithful servant of God, the other the infamous slave of Satan. Saul and Jonathan fell both in the same battle; and yet the difference between them was very great. The pious Josiah and the idolatrous Ahab were both killed in battle by an arrow (*l*). That wicked Prince Zedekiah, and the prophet Daniel, were both carried away captives into Babylon (*m*); but who thinks their merits equal? As this consideration should restrain us from forming precipitate judgments, and induce us not to think unfavourably of those who are involved in difficulties and distress, and labour under poverty, sickness, &c. it may likewise serve to comfort us when we are involved in sufferings, together with the most impious malefactors. For the Lord knows his own who have departed from evil; and a day will come when the difference between the righteous and unrighteous will be made manifest before the eyes of Angels and all the human race. In the mean time, it is our duty by our calmness, patience, and resignation, so to distinguish ourselves from the children of this world, that others may see that a different spirit dwells in us from that which worketh in the children of unbelief.

(*l*) Chron. xviii. 33. xxxv. 23.
Dan. i. 2, 6.

(*m*) Jer. lii. 11.

3. God by a timely death often delivers his children from some great calamity intended them.

The Lord Jesus by his death, in which he freely laid down his life, prevented the cruelty of the soldiers, who designed to torture him by breaking his legs. Thus God still frequently brings his children into safety by an early death, before the floods of his judgments break in, and spread a general desolation over their country; or before the wicked can execute the impious schemes they had planned against them. However the infinite wisdom of God is pleased to dispose of us, we must rest satisfied with his dispensations. If the Lord of life and death is pleased, by a sudden dissolution, to remove us from some impending misfortune, it is to deliver us from the evil; and were we to suffer the calamity, we have cause thankfully to acknowledge, that not a hair shall fall from our heads without his knowledge and permission.

II.

But, instead of the intended insult of breaking the legs of Jesus, God permitted another indignity to be offered his sacred body; and the account of this insult is the subject of the remaining verses of the text (*n*), which contain the following particulars.

(*n*) Verse 34, 35, 36.

First,

First, The person who did this injury to our Saviour's body, and he is here mentioned. This was one of the soldiers, namely, one of those who had broke the legs of the two malefactors. This man, contrary to the respect he owed to his officer, (who had given a public testimony of Christ's innocence) had the presumption to offer this indignity to the blessed Jesus, after his death. Possibly, his design by this brutal insult to the dead body was to please the Jews; who perhaps had bribed him to do it, or at least, would not fail to reward him for his insolence.

Secondly, The indignity offered to our Saviour's body, which was this: A soldier with a spear stabbed it in the breast or side. This was done, indeed, out of wantonness or insolence *; or, perhaps, the soldier might at the same time have an intention of trying, whether Jesus was really dead, or only in a swoon. He therefore stabs him with a spear near the heart, that he might see whether he had still any life in him; so that by giving him a wound, he designed to dispatch him, in case any life remained in him †. That it was no small wound which

* Sic SAGITTARIUS loco citato. p. 1080.

† Sic GE. WOLF. WEDELIUS in *Exerc. Medico-philol. Cent. I. Dec. III. Exerc. I.* qui factum hoc vulnus à milite putat ideo, ut exploraret, an Christus verè esset mortuus, & si minus, eum penitus conficeret. Vulnus verò usque ad cordis thalamos per-tigisse censet, in quo sanguis & aqua sit, quæ tamen iis circum-stantiis hîc effluerint, ut non sine miraculo id factum esse dicendum sit.

the

the spear made in the breast of our blessed Lord, but a large incision, appears from what he says to the incredulous Thomas, after his Resurrection, ' Reach hither thy hand, and ' thrust it into my side (o).

Thirdly, What followed this injurious piercing of our Saviour's side is likewise mentioned by St. John, in these words: ' And forthwith ' came thereout blood and water.' This was undoubtedly an extraordinary event; since the providence of God directed the soldier's spear to make an incision in the place where these different humours were lodged, and, at the same time, hindered these two fluids from intermixing; for St. John, who stood by, could plainly distinguish both blood and water issuing from the wound.

Fourthly, Mention is made of the certainty of this remarkable incident, in these words: ' And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith ' true, that ye might believe.' The certainty of this extraordinary phænomenon is confirmed,

1. As it is related by one who had it not by hear-say, but saw it with his own eyes.

2. As St. John is a credible witness; who was admitted by Christ among his Apostles, that he might bear a true testimony of the actions and occurrences of his life, death, and resurrection,

(o) John xx. 27.

3. As

3. As his record was delivered after deliberate and mature thought, with the assisting light of the Holy Spirit, and with a Divine assurance; therefore it is added 'and he knoweth that he saith true.' But St. John here likewise mentions the end, for which he bare record in these words: 'that ye might believe; namely, that our Saviour's side was thus pierced, and consequently that he did really die on the cross. The beloved disciple, with his own eyes, saw blood and water issue from his Lord's pierced side, which affecting sight must have made his heart likewise bleed within him. This faithful witness relates it to us, that we may also believe. Therefore, 'Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.'

Fifthly and Lastly, the Evangelist mentions the counsel of God concerning this matter: 'These things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled.' Hereupon St. John quotes the prophecy in which it is said; 'They [the Jews] will, one day, look on him, whom [by the Roman soldier's spear] they pierced (p).' Hence it appears, that this incident had been predicted in Scripture; and consequently that it did not happen fortuitously, and from the mere insolence of a licentious soldier, but that the counsel of God was likewise concerned in the accomplishment of it.

(p) Zech. xii. 10.

But the principal view of Providence in ordering this event, and causing it to be foretold by the Prophet, seems to be this; namely, that the certainty of Christ's death might be confirmed and ratified by it. Some may perhaps say, Is it of such very great importance for us to know that Jesus Christ really died on the cross? to which it may be answered that it greatly concerns us. For if Christ be not really dead, the power of death is not really destroyed; since this was to be effected by the Mediator's death. If he did not die in reality, so neither is he risen in reality. But if his resurrection be merely a delusion, St. Paul's inference is, 'that our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins (q).'

But if it be asked, What was the purpose of God in ordering, that our blessed Saviour's side discharged both blood and water? In answering this question, it must be pre-supposed that blood and water represented the two principal benefits which Christ has acquired for us. The blood represents the benefit of atonement, which is applied to us in justification. For 'in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (r).'

The water represents the benefit of sanctification and cleansing from sin, of which Jesus Christ has laid the foundation, by obtaining and sending on his disciples the Holy Ghost, which is often represented in Scripture under the

(q) 1 Cor. xv. 17.

(r) Col. i. 14.

figure of water, as softening, cleansing, and fertilizing the heart. Hence the Messiah says by the mouth of the Prophet (s), ' Then will
' I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye
' shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and
' from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new
' heart also will I give you, and a new spirit
' will I put within you; I will take away the
' stony heart out of your flesh, and I will
' give you an heart of flesh. And I will put
' my spirit within you, and cause you to walk
' in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'

In order to enter deeper into the consideration of this mystery, we must

First, Take a view of the condition to which we are reduced by the Fall. By the transgression of our first Parents, we are sunk into a two-fold evil, both of which are very deplorable. For, by the transgression of the Divine command, we have brought on ourselves a heavy guilt; and by reason of our disobedience, are obnoxious to the sentence of death which God passed on our first Parents, and the punishment contained in this threatening, ' Thou shalt surely die.' We have likewise sustained a great loss by forfeiting the glorious image of God; so that our whole nature is defiled by sin. In order to recover this Divine similitude which we had lost, we must apply to another to deliver us from the guilt

(s) Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

276 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

and punishment, and to repair that immense loss and damage we had sustained by the Fall. Now this has been done by Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is come in his mediatorial office with BLOOD, without which there can be no forgiveness of sins (*t*). Therefore he shed his blood, and with it, at the same time, poured out his soul to death; and by his death our debt is blotted out, God's justice is satisfied, remission of sins is obtained, and thus one evil is removed. But he also came with WATER, *i. e.* with the Holy Ghost, by which the defilements of our nature are done away, its impurity effaced, good resolutions imparted, the loss of the Divine image restored, and by this means the second evil is removed; and this is the key for understanding those words of St. John: 'This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood (*u*).'

Secondly, We are likewise in this mystery to turn our thoughts to the design of the whole Levitical oeconomy, in which these two benefits acquired by Christ are adumbrated by many types. There were particularly two things expressive of the future benefits conferred in the New Covenant.

1. Water, with which those who were under any bodily pollution were to wash and cleanse themselves from their legal impurities.

(*t*) Heb. ix. 22.

(*u*) 1 John v. 6.

2. The blood of the animal that was slain as a sacrifice, which was shed in great quantities under the Mosaic dispensation. Both these means were used sometimes separately, sometimes together (*y*). Blood was the means of atonement, and represented the atoning power of Christ's blood, the true sacrifice for the sins of the world (*z*). Water was the means of purification, and prefigured the true purifying of the heart by the spirit of Christ (*a*). The priests by the Levitical law were, at their consecration, cleansed with water and blood (*b*). But the real High Priest of the New Covenant, who is holy and without sin, stands in no need of being first purified and cleansed with water and blood of atonement; he having himself acquired those benefits for us. In this he has not, like the Levitical priests, made use of blood of victims and water from without; but he is come with blood and water issuing from his own body, and thus by himself has cleansed us from our sins (*c*).

3. This circumstance should likewise direct our thoughts to the two Sacraments of the New Covenant, which are manifest and powerful memorials of these two benefits procured for us by Jesus Christ; by means of which the treasure of the death and merits of our Saviour are appropriated to us. For the water, which

(*y*) Lev. xiv. 2—8. Heb. ix. 19.
x. 4.

(*a*) Heb. x. 22.

(*z*) Heb. ix. 13, 14.

(*b*) Lev. viii. 6, 22, 23.

(*c*) Heb. i. 2. ix. 12.

278 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

flowed out of his side, alludes to the laver of Baptism, in which by water and the Holy Ghost we are cleansed from all our sins and impurities (*d*). But the blood which issued from his side alludes to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which represents the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins (*e*). O the depth of the wisdom and adorable mystery of the counsel of God in this event, which was apparently so inconsiderable! We shall now conclude with the following observations.

1. Jesus Christ, by this insult committed on his breathless body, intended to sanctify all the insults and indignities done to his martyrs and confessors after their death.

Whoever will look back a little to the history of the martyrs, will find that the persecutors of the Christians (so insatiable was their rancour) frequently treated in an opprobrious manner the bodies of the saints, after they had been cruelly tortured to death. The most usual indignities were as follows. Their bodies were exposed naked and without burial, and at the same time the persecutors prohibited the Christians to fetch them away, and deposit them in the earth. Sometimes they threw the bodies of deceased martyrs into the water, and sometimes into the fire; others were thrown to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey, to wild beasts, &c. But all these indignities done to

(*d*) Acts xxii. 16.

(*e*) Matth. xxvi. 28.

the bodies of Christians are sanctified, by Christ's suffering his sacred body to be wounded by a profane hand, after his death.

2. As our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has suffered a fountain for sin and uncleanness to be opened for us in his body on the cross, we should diligently make use of it in order to obtain eternal salvation.

By this blood and water which flowed out of our Saviour's side, is obtained what all the Levitical purifications and sprinklings with blood and water typified, indeed, but could not in reality perform. Let us then with joy draw water out of this well of salvation (*f*). Let us approach this free and open fountain with an heart convinced, both of the dreadful guilt of sin, and of the infinite loss we sustained thereby; that we may find forgiveness of the guilt of sin in the blood of Jesus Christ, and be washed from the uncleanness of sin in this pure water. Let us attentively consider St. Paul's exhortation to the Hebrews: ' Having therefore, ' brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest ' by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with ' a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having ' our hearts sprinkled, [with the blood of ' atonement of the new covenant] from an ' evil conscience, and our bodies washed with ' pure water (*g*).

(*f*) Isa. xii. 3.
1 Pet. i. 1, 2.

(*g*) Heb. x. 19, 22. Heb. ix. 14.

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour, we praise thee for all the tokens of thy love, and for all the several kinds of insults and indignities which thou wast pleased to endure for our sake, both before and after thy death. Grant that we may hasten to the streams of blood and water which flowed out of thy side, and obtain remission of sins by a worthy participation of the sacraments, which they represented. Amen.

CONSIDERATION XII.

The blood of the sacrifice of atonement a type of the blood of Jesus Christ.

‘(a) **T**HE life of the flesh is in the Blood,
 ‘ and I have given it unto you upon
 ‘ the altar, to make an atonement for your
 ‘ soul: For it is the Blood, that maketh an
 ‘ atonement for the soul.’

In the last Consideration, we gave some short introductory hints towards explaining the mystery concealed under the blood and water, which issued from our Saviour's side after his death. But this is a matter of such importance, that it may well deserve a farther discussion. For this end, let us go into the typical school

(a) Lev. xvii. 11.

of the Holy Ghost, and endeavour to illustrate the two most remarkable types of this mysterious stream of blood and water; namely, the blood of the sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament, and the water gushing out of the rock, that was struck by Moses.

In our enquiry into the mystery concealed under the blood of the sacrifice, these two articles offer themselves to our consideration.

First, The blood of the sacrifice itself.

Secondly, The ceremonies observed about it.

As to the blood of those clean animals which were appointed for sacrifices, it was the chief article in the whole Levitical worship. When a person by a transgression of the Divine Law had deserved death, he brought, in the stead of himself, such a victim as God had nominated; laid his hand on it, and confessed his crime over it. From that instant, the victim was considered as if itself had committed the crime, and thus deserved death; but the atonement for such a sin was not made till all the blood of the animal was drained off, and poured at the foot of the altar. Hence St. Paul says (*b*), ‘that without shedding of blood there is no remission. Now if we consider how many millions of victims were thus sacrificed, from the time of Moses to that of our Saviour, first in the court of the Tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple of Jerusalem; the immense quantity of blood, shed in all

(*b*) Heb. ix. 22.

those

282 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

those sacrifices, must fill us with horror and amazement *.

The blood of the sacrifices so profusely shed was, under the Old Testament, accounted very sacred. No person, under pain of death, was to apply this blood to his own private use; God having reserved it for himself alone, and strictly enjoined that it should be poured out at his altar. Nay, in order to impress the greater awe and veneration for this blood of the sacrifices †, it was likewise prohibited by the Levitical law, to eat the blood of any creature that was killed for common use, as appears by the following precept of God in Leviticus (c): ‘ Whatsoever man there
‘ be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers
‘ that sojourn among you, that eateth any
‘ manner of blood, I will even set my face
‘ against that soul that eateth blood, and will
‘ cut him off from among this people.’ This injunction is likewise repeated in another place:
‘ Thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy

* Josephus in his history of the Jewish wars, B. vi. c. 9. affirms that 255,600 paschal lambs were killed in the temple at Jerusalem in one day, at the feast of the Passover. Their blood, according to *Lundius's* computation, must have amounted to 1000 hogsheads. See his Jewish sanctuary, B. iii. C. 46.

† Id SPENCERUS etiam agnovit de leg. ritual. Hebr. lib. i. c. 7. §. 2. ubi monet, Deum legem illam tulisse, *ut sanguini honorem & reverentiam quandam conciliaret*, quasi dixisset legislator: Quum sanguis ipsa sit animalium vita atque anima, eam animarum vestrarum ἀντιλυτρον posui, & in usum sanctissimum peccatorum vestrorum expiationem separavi. Sanguinem igitur abstinentiâ religiosâ honoretis, nec rem, altari meo sacram, mensis vestris inferatis.

(c) Chap. xvii. 10.

‘ gates,

‘ gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee; the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roe-buck and as of the hart. Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it on the earth as water (*d*).

Commentators have produced many reasons, why the eating of blood was so strictly forbidden under the old covenant. Some are of opinion that it was prohibited because the eating of blood is pernicious to the human body. It is the opinion of others, that God in his wisdom forbade it, in order to restrain men from all bloody and cruel dispositions. Others assign other reasons for this prohibition, but equally unsatisfactory. But God himself, who can best explain his own laws, has made known to us another cause, very different from any of those mentioned above. For after prohibiting the eating of blood, the Law-giver adds in the following verses, ‘ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make an atonement for your soul; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. Therefore, I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood (*e*).

It is here asserted that the life of the flesh is in the blood. For while the blood circulates

(*d*) Deut. xii. 15, 16.

(*e*) Lev. xvii. 11, 12.

in the bodies of brutes, they live ; but if the blood be let out of their bodies, they remain without motion, and their animal life is at an end. As often therefore as the blood of a sacrificed animal was shed, it was looked on by God as if the soul of the victim was offered up to his justice ; and this soul of the animal was farther considered as a ransom for the rational soul of the sinner.

The case was this : When any one by transgressing the ceremonial Law of God had deserved death, his soul might justly have been violently forced from his body, and brought before the tribunal of the Supreme Lawgiver, there, according to the rule of Divine justice to receive the sentence it had deserved, which was this, ‘ The soul that sinneth shall die.’ But God, in the ceremonial Law, was pleased to permit the sinner to redeem his soul by the soul of a beast ; or, that for his own soul he should offer the soul of a victim. Now the soul of an irrational animal is by no means an equivalent ransom for the rational soul of a man ; there being a very great disproportion betwixt them. However, this soul of the beast, which was poured out with its blood at the foot of the altar, was accepted by the Divine Justice, as a pledge for the soul and blood of Jesus Christ, which were in due time to be shed for the sins of the whole world, and to be offered up to the Divine Justice. Now as the blood of the sacrifice, or the animal
soul

soul of the sacrificed victim was accepted instead of the soul of the transgressor; so the Mediator's soul, which was separated from his body by a bloody and violent death, was accepted at the Divine tribunal, as the ransom for the souls of many sinners who had deserved death, and as a sin-offering to atone for their transgressions (*f*). When this was accomplished, and Christ had by a bloody death laid down his soul as a sin-offering; the type of the sacrificed blood was fulfilled, and the prohibition of eating blood no longer continued in force: And it was then universally proclaimed, that God, in consideration of the blood of Jesus Christ his beloved Son, which had been typified by copious streams of blood shed in the Levitical sacrifices, would remit men their sins, and acquit them from punishment, if they repent and believe in Christ.

Let us now, from the type, pass to the great Antitype. The blood of Christ is in Scripture represented as the cause of our justification, sanctification, and glorification. I shall only mention the principal passages relating to this subject, which are as follows.

‘ This is my blood of the New Testament,
‘ which is shed for many [for the infinite mul-
‘ titude of Adam's descendants] for the remis-
‘ sion of sins (*g*). My flesh is meat indeed, and
‘ my blood is drink indeed; he that eateth my
‘ flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in

(*f*) Isa. liii. 10.

(*g*) Matth. xxvi. 28.

' me and I in him (*b*). Whom God hath set
 ' forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his
 ' blood (*i*). Much more then, being justified
 ' through his blood, we shall be saved from
 ' wrath, through him (*k*). In whom we have
 ' redemption through his blood, the forgive-
 ' ness of sins (*l*). But now in Christ Jesus, ye,
 ' who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh
 ' by the blood of Christ (*m*). Having made
 ' peace through the blood of his cross (*n*). For
 ' if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes
 ' of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth
 ' to the purifying of the flesh; how much more
 ' shall the blood of Christ, who, through the
 ' eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to
 ' God, purge your conscience from dead works
 ' to serve the living God (*o*). Having there-
 ' fore, brethren, boldness to enter into the
 ' Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and
 ' living way, which he has consecrated for us
 ' through the vail, that is to say, his flesh (*p*).
 ' Ye know that ye were not redeemed with
 ' corruptible things as silver and gold, from your
 ' vain conversation received by tradition from
 ' your fathers; but with the precious blood of
 ' Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and
 ' without spot (*q*). The blood of Jesus Christ

(*b*) John vi. 55, 56.(*k*) Rom. v. 9.(*m*) Eph. ii. 13.(*o*) Heb. ix. 13, 14.(*q*) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.(*i*) Rom. iii. 25.(*l*) Eph. i. 7.(*n*) Col. i. 20.(*p*) Heb. x. 19.

‘ his Son cleanseth us from all sins (r). He
 ‘ hath loved us and washed us from our sins in
 ‘ his own blood (s). These are they who came
 ‘ out of great tribulation, and have washed their
 ‘ robes, and have made them white in the
 ‘ blood of the Lamb (t). They overcame him by
 ‘ the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their
 ‘ testimony (u).’ Thus the blood of Jesus Christ,
 and its powerful influence, is set forth unto us in
 the New Testament.

But in order rightly to understand all these
 passages of Scripture, it is to be observed, that
 under the name of blood, the Holy Ghost usually
 comprehends both the entire obedience, and the
 sacrifice of our blessed Saviour. Hence St.
 Paul (x) uses the word blood and sacrifices as
 synonymous terms: ‘ It is was therefore neces-
 ‘ sary that the patterns of things in the heavens
 ‘ should be purified with blood, but the hea-
 ‘ venly things themselves with better sacrifices
 ‘ than these.’ This sacrifice, which Christ
 offered to his Father for our reconciliation, in-
 cludes likewise the prayers and supplications,
 the strong cries and tears, which he offered up
 in the days of his flesh (y); all the reproaches,
 the insults, and contradiction of sinners; all the
 pains and agonies of his body and soul; and
 lastly, his death on the cross, in which they
 terminated. The Apostle, in the Epistle to

(r) 1 John i. 7.

(s) Rev. vii. 14.

(x) Heb. ix. 23.

(t) Rev. i. 5.

(u) Rev. xii. 11.

(y) Heb. 5. 7.

the Hebrews, says of the blood of Christ, 'Ye
' are come to the blood of Sprinkling, which
' speaketh better things than the blood of
' Abel (2).' It speaks

1. To God, and cries to him, not as the blood of Abel did, for vengeance on those who shed it, or caused it to be shed; but for atonement, reconciliation, and mercy on the human race, which was sunk into extreme misery. As often as his heavenly Father thinks on this blood, he must also think on the astonishing obedience of his Son, who shed it on the cross; on the outrages, and all the tortures which he endured; and consequently is thereby powerfully moved to pour down upon us pardon, forgiveness, and blessings.

2. The blood of Christ speaks likewise to men. It speaks to secure and bold sinners, who go on in their impenitence and profligacy; and represents to them the inestimable value of their immortal souls, which can be redeemed from destruction only by the precious blood of the Son of God. It represents to them the abomination of sin, which defiles human nature with such spots, as can only be washed away by the blood of the Son of God. It represents to them the holiness and justice of God, which, for an atonement, has required such a ransom.

Farther, it speaks to penitent sinners who know their misery and depravity, and are deeply humbled for their sins. It represents to them

(2) Heb. xii. 24.

the inconceivable love of God, which moved him to give up to so bloody a death his only Son. It promises them the remission of all their sins; informing their conscience, that the wrath of God is appeased, his justice satisfied, and his mercy ready to receive into his bosom, and impart grace to, every soul that is sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

Blessed is he, who with faith and obedience hears the voice of this blood, speaking peace to his conscience. Though the blood of Christ implores mercy for us, and speaks better things than the blood of Abel; nevertheless, on those who, instead of being moved by it to faith and repentance, tread it under foot, and account the blood of the covenant an unholy thing (z), it will one day still more loudly cry out for vengeance.

II.

We now proceed to consider the ceremonies observed, with regard to the blood of the sacrifices, in the Old Testament; and these are chiefly the following.

1. The shedding of the blood. This was done by slaying the victim that was to be offered; its throat being cut with a sacrificing knife, so that the blood was all drained out of the animal's body (a).

(z) Heb. x. 29.

(a) Levit. i. 5.

290 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

2. The receiving the blood. As the blood of the victim was shed, so was it received into a vessel, which one of the Priests held for that purpose.

3. The sprinkling of the blood. In some sacrifices, the blood was sprinkled on the horns or corners of the Brazen Altar (*b*). In others, it was sprinkled on the horns of the Golden Altar of incense, in the Sanctuary (*c*). Sometimes it was sprinkled against the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (*d*). In other cases, even the book of the Law, and the people, and the consecrated vessels of the Tabernacle, were sprinkled with blood (*e*).

4. The pouring out of the blood at the foot of the Altar (*f*). Now there were in the Temple certain conduits, by which the blood was carried off into the brook Cedron.

5. The carrying of the blood into the Holy of Holies. This was done only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement.

Let us, in the next place, with a holy reverence, consider the mysteries, which the Wisdom of God has caused to be typified by these ceremonies. For none of them were arbitrary, or without a meaning; but the Supreme Wisdom, by which the whole Levitical Service was instituted, had its secret views in these bloody sacrifices, to which they were all directed. For as the sacrifice of the blood, in general, typi-

(*b*) Lev. iii. 2, 13.

(*d*) Lev. xvi. 14, 15.

(*f*) Lev. iv. 7.

(*c*) Lev. iv. 7, 18.

(*e*) Heb. ix. 19, 21.

fied the blood of Jesus Christ; so the ceremonies which accompanied the sacrifices, likewise prefigured the circumstances that attended the sacrifice of Jesus Christ

1. The shedding of the blood of the victim, that was sacrificed, represented the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, of which our blessed Saviour says (g), ' This is my blood, which ' was shed for many, for the remission of sins. Now, the blood of Jesus Christ was very copiously shed in his sufferings. It was shed in great drops during his agony in the Garden on the Mount of Olives, whither he went across the brook Cedron, into which the blood of the sacrifices was conveyed from the Temple. It was shed when he was cruelly scourged. It was shed when he was crowned with thorns. It was shed at his crucifixion, when the nails were driven through both his hands and feet. Lastly, it was shed by piercing his side with a spear, even after his death. The remaining part of the blood which in death had collected itself about the heart, from all the veins, had a free passage totally to run out. Thus was the blood of our Redeemer abundantly shed for us.

2. The receiving the blood of the Victim in a particular vessel, which was held under by one of the Priests, indicates in general the reverence and holiness which ought to be observed towards the blood of Jesus Christ, and

(g) Matth. xxvi. 28.

the sacrifice he offered. The Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (*e*), speaks of some who accounted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, and as it were, trod under foot the Son of God. But he intimates, that the punishment of such profane persons will be very grievous at the last day.

3. The sprinkling of the blood. Of this ceremony the Jews make great account, and call it the root of the sacrifice; however it prefigured many mysteries of the New Testament.

4. The pouring forth the blood of the sacrifice at the foot of the altar, represents, with regard to Christ, the abundant shedding of his blood on the Cross, till the absolute separation of his body and soul. For it is said of Christ, 'He hath poured out his soul unto death (*f*);' and consequently he poured out his blood with the utmost willingness, and overflowing zeal, for the honour of God, and the unspeakable good of mankind.

5. Lastly, the High Priest, by entering with the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, shewed that Christ, after shedding his blood on the Cross, would enter into the heavenly sanctuary, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

Let us now all, without delay, comply with the following exhortation of St. Paul: (*g*) 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter in-

(*e*) Chap. x. 29.

(*g*) Heb. x. 19.

(*f*) Isa. liii. 12.

‘ to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a
 ‘ new and living way, which he hath consecrated
 ‘ for us through the vail, that it is to say, his
 ‘ flesh, and having an High Priest over the
 ‘ house of God, let us draw near with a true
 ‘ heart, in full assurance of faith, having our
 ‘ hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and
 ‘ our bodies washed with pure water. Let us
 ‘ hold fast the profession of our faith without
 ‘ wavering, for he is faithful that has promised ;
 ‘ and let us consider one another to provoke
 ‘ unto love, and to good works: Not for-
 ‘ saking the assembling of ourselves together, as
 ‘ the manner of some is ; but exhorting one
 ‘ another, and so much the more, as ye see
 ‘ the day approaching.’

Moreover, the blood of Jesus Christ has a particular use, in which it differs from the typifying blood of the victims in the Old Testament. No person, under pain of death, was to drink of the latter ; but Christ says on the contrary, in the New Testament, ‘ Drink ye all of this, my
 ‘ blood, &c. (b).’ Nay even death is threatened in the gospel to those, who will not partake of it :
 ‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat
 ‘ the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his
 ‘ blood, ye have no life in you (i).’ On the other hand life is promised to those, who drink it with true faith : ‘ Whoso eateth my flesh,
 ‘ and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and
 ‘ I will raise him at the last day. For my

(b) Matth. xxvi. 27, 28.

(i) John vi. 53.

294 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

' flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink
' indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drink-
' eth my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him (k).'
This eating of the flesh of Christ, and drink-
ing his blood, is figuratively done in the holy
Sacrament of the Lord's supper, to which the
Son of God undoubtedly here alludes.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Thou faithful and ever-living Saviour, we
bless, we praise and extol thee for shedding
thy precious blood on the Cross, in our stead, and
for pouring out thy soul unto death, in order to
redeem us from death eternal. Grant that we
may never forget this inestimable benefit; and
be pleased incessantly to renew the thoughts of it
in our souls. Thou, O my Saviour, by the
shedding of thy blood on the Cross, hast accom-
plished the whole work of redemption; so that
there is no need that thou shouldest die again, and
offer thyself a second time, since by one sacrifice
of thyself, once offered, thou hast perfected all
those who shall be sanctified. Give us grace,
O blessed Jesus, to make a faithful application
of thy sacrifice, and gratefully to commemorate
it in the Sacrament which thou hast instituted,
until thy coming again. Amen.

(k) John vi. 54, 55, 56.

C O N-

CONSIDERATION XIII.

The water which flowed from the rock, a type of the water which issued forth from our SAVIOUR'S side.

‘ (a) **A**ND the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journies, according to the commandments of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: And there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle, with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the Elders of Israel: And thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there, upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the

(a) Exod. xvii. 1—6.

U 4

‘ rock,

‘ rock, and there shall come water out of it,
‘ that the people may drink. And Moses did
‘ so, in the sight of the Elders of Israel.’

In these words we have an account of a surprising miracle which God wrought in the deserts of Arabia. The occasion of this wonderful display of the Divine power, was the want of water. For though the children of Israel had plenty of flesh and bread, to satisfy their hunger; the quails lying in heaps about their tents, and the Manna falling every night on the earth; yet they were in extreme want of water. Thus God, in his wisdom, seldom gives men at once every thing they wish for; but permits them to feel the want of something, in order to keep them in continual discipline, and oblige them to look up to his all-dispensing hand. In this exigency, the Israelites returned to their impious mistrust of the Divine providence, even so as to break out in menacing murmurs against Moses. Thus, the distress which now came upon them discovered the wickedness, that lay concealed in their obdurate hearts. At the waters of Marah, which were miraculously sweetened for their use, and at the twelve wells of Elim, they shewed no distrust, or want of faith. But no sooner were they again in want of water, but their unbelief manifested itself in wicked murmurs. Thus it is, to this very day. While men are surrounded with plenty and affluence, they abound in faith, and trust in God. But when God deprives them of
their

their riches, &c. and puts them to the test, how far they believe in him; then they are too apt to betray their want of belief. The children of Israel ought to have been contented and easy, notwithstanding this want of water; since they were assured, that it was not by any mistake of their leader, but by God's command, that they were come into this barren wilderness, in which there was no water: For it is said in the text, 'They journeyed according to the commandments of the Lord.' But this unthinking people did not look up unto God, nor attend to the motion of his hand, which had brought them into these streights; but in their impatience, they murmured and exclaimed against Moses, the glorious instrument that God was pleased to make use of to conduct them through the wilderness. They did not have recourse to their Almighty Creator, and pray to him for water in their distress; but they went to Moses, and peremptorily insisted on his providing water for their use: 'Give us water, say they, that we may drink.' However, though these words proceeded from a very wicked disposition; yet may we borrow them from these thirsty Israelites, and, with a better frame of mind, apply them to Jesus Christ, saying, 'Give us water, that we may drink.' This our blessed Lord himself has permitted us to do. For it is not only to the Samaritan woman, but to every one of us, that Jesus says, 'If thou knewest the gift of God,

' and

298 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

‘ and who it is that faith to thee, give me to
 ‘ drink, thou wouldest have asked of him,
 ‘ and he would have given thee living wa-
 ‘ ter (b).’

Moses indeed briefly remonstrates to them, that their misbehaviour was very sinful, and says, ‘ Why chide you with me? Wherefore ‘ do ye tempt the Lord?’ But he did not think it advisable to enter into a long expostulation with this infatuated multitude, who were already looking out for stones to assault him. He then addressed himself to God; and intreated him not to revenge and punish such murderous intentions, but to give him direction and assistance in such a critical time. Now as Moses, in this instance, is a follower of God by his patience and long-suffering; so we ought to imitate Moses, and in the like circumstances to possess our souls in patience and gentleness.

God, by the intercession of his faithful servant Moses, is prevailed upon to work a miracle, to remove the people’s distress; upon which their fury subsided. For this end, Moses is directed to go to a rock on Mount Horeb. The Omnipotence of God could have raised a cloud from the sea, and after having driven it by the wind to the wilderness, have dissolved it in rain; or have caused a spring to gush out of the earth, with which the people might have quenched their thirst. But God was pleased to bring forth abundance of

(b) John iv. 10, &c.

water,

water, by cleaving a hard rock. Thus, he did not only give a more manifest proof of his Omnipotence, in accomplishing his design by such improbable means; but likewise intended to make the Israelites ashamed of the hardness of their hearts, and at the same time by these circumstances, to shadow out some future event of a sublimer nature. Moses was to strike this rock with the same rod, with which he had performed his wonders in Egypt, and had divided the waters of the red sea. God reminds Moses of this circumstance, in the following words: 'Take ' in thine hand thy rod wherewith thou smotest ' the river;' so that by recollecting the former miracle, Moses's faith might be strengthened, and the unbelief of the people confounded.

Two sorts of spectators were present at the striking of this rock;

1. Christ himself, in the pillar of the cloud, who is supposed to say in the text, 'Behold, ' I will stand before thee there, upon the rock ' in Horeb,' *i. e.* I will manifest myself in my glory, over the rock that shall be struck. But Christ is by no means to be thought a mere spectator on this occasion. It was by his power, that this miracle was to be performed. As he had before directed the flight of the quails to the wilderness, and caused them to come and fall down among the tents of the children of Israel; so now he, in a wonderful manner, directs the course of the water to this rock.

2. The

2. The other class of spectators were the Elders of the people; who were appointed to be witnesses of this miracle. The bulk of the people, by their unbelief, had rendered themselves unworthy of seeing this operation of the Divine omnipotence.

In the presence of the abovementioned spectators, Moses struck the rock with his rod, and in an instant produced a copious stream of living water, as appears from several other passages of Scripture (c).

If we would search deeper into the mystery of this remarkable transaction; St. Paul, who is an unexceptionable authority as to the true intention of God, throws a great light upon it in these words: 'Our fathers did all drink
' the same spiritual drink; for they drank of
' that spiritual rock that followed them; and
' that rock was Christ (d).' From these words we may learn two things,

First, That the rock which Moses struck had a spiritual import, and represented Christ.

Secondly, That the water, which flowed from the rock, had also a spiritual meaning; hence is it termed by the Apostle, a 'spiritual drink.'
i. e. drink which typified something spiritual.

Our blessed Saviour, in several passages of the Old Testament, when described as a protector and deliverer of his people, is called a Rock. Moses speaks thus of the Israelites:

(c) Psa. lxxviii. 15, 16. cv. 41. cxiv. 8. Isa. xlviii. 21.

(d) 1 Cor. x. 4.



‘Jesurun waxed fat and kicked, and forsook
‘God who made him, and lightly esteemed
‘the Rock of his salvation (f);’ or, as the
original phrase imports, treated him like a fool,
or an idiot.

A rock is hard, permanent, and immovable;
and therefore a proper type to prefigure,

1. The eternity and immutability of Christ.
2. His invincible firmness and strength.
3. His being an asylum to some, and an offence to others.

Those, who in confidence of faith fly to him
for refuge, find safety and protection. Thus
anciently, in time of war, the people betook
themselves to the highest rocks for safety against
the attacks of the enemy. But they,
who through unbelief dash themselves against
this spiritual rock, do it to their own destruction.
Hence Christ is stiled in Scripture, ‘a Rock of
‘offence and a stumbling stone (g).’ Thus we
see, how very properly our blessed Saviour is in
general compared to a rock.

But this rock, of which we are now treating,
represents Christ only in one particular, namely,
that when it was struck with Moses’s rod,
it sent forth water; and in this event we find
a twofold mystery.

First, The sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, The abundant gifts of the Holy
Ghost, which our blessed Saviour has acquired
for us by his sufferings.

(f) Deut. xxxii. 15.

(g) Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8.

The former is represented by striking the rock with the Lawgiver's rod ; and the second is typified by the plenty of water which this stroke produced. These two particulars we shall now enlarge upon ; and observe the wonderful resemblance between the type and the great Antitype.

I.

The following resemblances may be observed between the rock that was struck, and Christ under his sufferings.

1. The rock Horeb derived its name from its aridity ; for it was a dry parched rock, which seems but ill adapted to be a copious spring of water, to quench the thirst of such a numerous people. Thus, it is said of our blessed Saviour in his state of abasement, ' He shall grow up ' as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ' ground (*b*). ' The Pharisees and rulers of the people, his enemies, were persons of wealth and distinction, and flourished like a green bay tree (*i*) ; but of the Messiah it is said, ' When ' we shall see him, there is no beauty that we ' should desire him (*k*). ' His mean appearance like a servant, his obscure parentage and other circumstances externally despicable, rendered him a rock of offence to his people, a stone which the builders rejected.

(*b*) Isa. liii. 2.(*i*) Psal. xxxvii. 35.(*k*) Isa. liii. 2.

2. The rock out of which the water was to flow, was pointed out to Moses by God himself. In like manner Christ was appointed by his Father before the foundation of the world, to be the Saviour of mankind, and the spring of living waters.

3. The glory of the Lord manifested itself over the rock which was struck, in the pillar of the cloud: 'Behold, I will stand before thee 'there upon the rock in Horeb.' Thus the visible human nature of Jesus, the Rock of salvation, was personally united with the Divine glory, which dwelled within it much more essentially than it did anciently in the cloud. Nay, the Divine glory displayed itself in Christ even in the lowest state of his humiliation; for, notwithstanding all the indignities and insults that were offered him, some rays of the Divinity beamed in the eyes of the Roman officer who stood at the Cross, so that he cried out, 'Truly 'this was the Son of God!'

4. The rock, on which God thus manifested his glory, was struck by his direction; so Jesus Christ, the Rock of salvation, was wounded by the permission, and according to the pre-determinate counsel and will of God; who says by the Prophet, 'Awake, O Sword, against 'my Shepherd, and the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts (1). The strokes which our spiritual Rock suffered, are

(1) Zech. xiii. 7.

the inward and outward sufferings of Jesus Christ.

5. The rock of Horeb was struck at a time when all Israel rebelled against the Lord and his servant Moses, and consequently little deserved so great a benefit. Thus the Rock of salvation was smitten by God, and made a spring of living water, when Israel committed the greatest of sins, by reviling and insulting the Rock of their salvation.†

6. The rock was struck in the presence of the Elders of Israel, who were witnesses of the miracle. Thus the Elders of the people, the Scribes, and the Rulers stood under the Cross of Christ, and saw how this Rock of our salvation was stricken and afflicted (*m*).

II.

We come, in the second place, to consider the water which came forth from the rock ; on which we shall make the following observations.

First, This water typified the rich abundance of grace, procured for us by the sufferings of Christ.

Secondly, As the water did not come forth until after the rock had been struck, and the glory of God had manifested itself above it ; so likewise the Holy Ghost was not poured forth in a visible manner, till the blessed Jesus had

(*m*) Matth. xxvii. 41. Luke xxiii. 35.

felt the curse of the law, satisfied the justice of God, terminated his sufferings in death, and was again raised and received into glory. Hence the Evangelist says, 'The Holy Ghost ' was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet ' glorified (n).'

Thirdly, As the rock of Horeb did not yield only a few drops, but whole streams of water issued from it, which allayed the present thirst of the people, and afterwards ran in the dry places like a river (o), to serve the people in any future exigency; so the Rock of our salvation, being smitten and wounded, is become a copious spring of living waters, so that this water of life is sufficient to satisfy all the whole Israel of God, in their pilgrimage through time into eternity.

Approach to this living water, ye who still quench your thirst in the impure streams of sinful lusts, and drink iniquity as a thirsty man does water. ' If any man thirst, saith our ' blessed Saviour, let him come to me, and drink: ' but this he spake of the Spirit,' as the Evangelist informs us (p). These are the words of your benevolent Saviour, who ardently desires your salvation. Let them not therefore pass by your ears to no purpose. Behold, for your sake he has suffered himself to be smitten and wounded; and by his meritorious sufferings has acquired for you the Spirit of Grace,

(n) John vii. 38, 39.

(o) Psal. cv. 41.

(p) John vii. 37, 39.

which in his Gospel you are freely invited to receive.

Come unto him also, ye who pant after grace, as the hart panteth after the refreshing stream; and be not deterred from approaching him by the sense of your unworthiness. Who could be more unworthy to receive water from the rock, than the seditious Israelites in the desert? Yet, notwithstanding all their murmuring, the mercy of God opened to them a copious spring of water.

Lastly, Come to those waters which flow from the Rock of Salvation, ye who have already experienced their enlivening virtue. Draw chearfully out of his inexhaustible fulness, and then you shall never thirst.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O My Saviour, whose merit is infinite, be pleased so to dispose our hearts, as to become partakers of the living waters of thy Spirit. Create in us a loathing of the turbid waters of sinful pleasures, and kindle in us an ardent thirst after thy grace. May we drink abundantly of the salutary streams of thy comforts, that we may arrive to those blissful regions, where we shall never thirst any more. Amen.

C O N-

CONSIDERATION XIV.

*The last Honours paid to the Body of the
LORD JESUS.*

‘ (a) **A**ND now, when the even was
‘ come, because it was the Prepara-
‘ tion, that is, the day before the Sabbath,
‘ came a rich man of Arimathea, a city of the
‘ Jews, named Joseph; he was an honourable
‘ Counsellor, and a good man and a just: The
‘ same had not consented to the counsel and
‘ deed of them, who also was a disciple of Jesus,
‘ (but secretly, for fear of the Jews) and waited
‘ for the kingdom of God: He went in boldly
‘ unto Pilate, and besought him that he might
‘ take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate
‘ marvelled if he were already dead; and calling
‘ unto him the Centurion, he asked him, whe-
‘ ther he had been any while dead? And when
‘ he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the
‘ body of Jesus to Joseph, and commanded it
‘ to be delivered to him. And Joseph bought
‘ fine linen. And there came also Nicodemus
‘ who at the first came unto Jesus by night, and
‘ brought a mixture of myrrhe and aloes, about
‘ an hundred pound weight. Then took they
‘ the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in the clean

(a) Matth. xxvii. 57—59. Mark xv. 42—46. Luke xxiii.
50—53. John xix. 38—40.

' linen, and wound it in linen clothes with the
' spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.'

In these words are described the last honours
paid to the breathless corps of the Lord Jesus,

First, By taking it down from the cross.

Secondly, By preparing it for an honourable
interment.

I.

Concerning the taking down of our Lord's
body from the cross, the Evangelical History
takes notice

1. Of the time when it was done.

2. The instruments, which the Providence of
God made use of for that end.

1. The time is denoted in general by St.
John in these words, ' After this,' *i. e.* after
Christ was in reality dead on the cross, and his
side had been pierced with a spear by one of
the soldiers. But St. Mark specifies the time
something more punctually, and observes, that
' it was in the evening,' *i. e.* according to the
Jewish computation of the day, between the
ninth and twelfth hour, or according to our
method of reckoning the hours, between three
and six of the clock in the afternoon; when
the Sun drew near the time of its setting, and
about two hours before night came on. It
is further observed by the Evangelist, that it
was the evening of the Preparation, or the day
before the Sabbath. Thus it was a Vigil, or
the

the Even of a day which was kept holy on a double account.

First, As it immediately preceded the Sabbath; hence it is called, the day before the Sabbath.

Secondly, As it ushered in the feast of the Passover, which fell out on that Sabbath; therefore it is also termed the day of Rest, or the Preparation for the Passover. According to our method of computing the days of the week, it was the Friday on which the Jews prepared themselves for the ensuing Sabbath, which was likewise the day of the Passover, the principal, and the most solemn festival observed by the Jews. About this time, the rest of the Jews were performing their hypocritical devotions in the Temple. But instead of this, Joseph and Nicodemus were employed in paying the last honours to the breathless corps of our blessed Lord; and in this they acted agreeably to the words of Jesus, namely, that mercy is better than sacrifice. This Eve of the Sabbath was a very proper time for the interment of the Lord Jesus; since the Son of God now rested from the work of Redemption, which might be considered partly as the conclusion of the Sabbaths instituted in the Old Testament; and partly as a preparation for the great Sabbath of the New Testament, on which the people of God were to rest from the laborious service of the ceremonial Law.

2. The instruments which the Divine providence was pleased to make use of on this occa-

sion. These had been before made known by the Prophet Isaiah (*b*), who says, that the Messiah should, in his death, be with the rich, &c. But what little appearance was there of the accomplishment of this prophecy; since the most wealthy and principal persons of the Jewish nation, not only rebelled against this King, whom God had determined to set up in Sion; but even condemned him to die. However, the eternal Wisdom of God soon provided the means to fulfil this prophecy. God raised up two persons to perform this office, of whom it was little thought that they would take on themselves the care of the body of a crucified person. Thus, when in any instance we have the Divine promise before us, though we cannot see any one near us, who is likely to perform it, yet we must not despair of relief. The Lord will provide a proper instrument, and will fulfill all his promises. But the chief instrument God made use of on this occasion, is described

First, By his name: which was Joseph. Thus, Joseph signalized his faith in honouring the corps of a person, who had died on the cross as despised and dejected of men, and had been sentenced to death as the vilest malefactor, with a decent interment. He is farther described

Secondly, By his country. As Joseph was a common name among the Jews, this person,

(*b*) Isaiah liii. 9.

by way of distinction, is stiled Joseph of Arimathea. This, according to St. Luke, was a town of Judea, and is placed by St. Jerom between Lydda and Joppa; but others will have it to be the town of Ramah, which was situated on a hill between Joppa and Jerusalem.

Thirdly, He is further described by his external circumstances. He was a rich man, and filled an honourable post either in the Sanhedrim, or in the city council of Jerusalem, which consisted of three and twenty persons; hence he is stiled a Counsellor. And thus was fulfilled what Isaiah had predicted in these words: 'And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death (c).' The meaning of this verse in the original is properly this: "The grave of the Messiah had indeed been appointed among the wicked; i. e. it had been agreed to bury him with contempt in some infamous place among the malefactors; " but he was found among the rich " after his death." These rich men were Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus who afterwards joined himself to the former.

Fourthly, Joseph is described according to his inward qualities. Some of these were such, as he had in common with many other persons of rank in those days. Thus he is stiled by St. Mark an honourable man*; but St. Luke observes,

(c) Chap. liii. 9.

* Vocabulum ευχρημων veteribus Græcis notasse virum Honestum; posterioribus vero Græcis virum spectabilem, honoratum

serves that, among other good qualities, he had so far shewn his attachment to justice and equity, as to act according to the dictates of his conscience; so that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of our Saviour's enemies (*d*). Hence it is evident, that he either did not make his appearance when the whole council assembled to condemn Jesus; or, if he was present, that he did not join in the vote for his condemnation. And if, with some commentators, we suppose him to have been only a member of the City-council; yet, he sufficiently expressed his disapprobation of the unjust proceedings of the great Council against Jesus. Thus far he might have proceeded by his mere natural probity, and the impulse of his conscience, which is naturally shocked at flagrant acts of injustice and cruelty. But St. Luke, in terming Joseph 'a good man and a just,' seems to allude to a distinction which was common among the Jews, who divided mankind into three classes, namely, Just men, Good men, and Sinners (*e*). The Sinners were those who perpetually wronged, injured, and did violence to others, without doing good to any one. The Just were those who, being content with what they had, never offered to molest or injure others. But none were stiled Good men, but those only who communicated of their sub-

ac divitem CLAUDIUS SALMASIUS observat, in libro de *Lingua Hellenistica*, p. 100.

(*d*) Luke xxii. 51.

(*e*) Rom. v. 6, 7.

stance to the poor and necessitous. This last was Joseph's character. For he was not only just, injuring no one; but he was good, benevolent, and liberal to others. He was just, as he did not consent to our Saviour's death. He was a good and generous man; since he defrayed the charges of his burial, which were very considerable.

But the Evangelists have specified more sublime and excellent endowments of mind, which this extraordinary person was possessed of.

1. St. John says, that he was a disciple of Jesus, *i. e.* he accounted Jesus a teacher sent from God, and his doctrine to be true and just, and agreeable to the writings of Moses and the Prophets. He was, consequently, not only a hearer of our blessed Lord, but an obedient and zealous observer of his doctrine. According to St. Matthew's account, he had so improved the knowledge which he had acquired of the Doctrine of Christ, that he himself had made disciples * or converts to Jesus; having, every where, in his conversation with others, introduced something which might afford matter of reflection, and cause them to entertain higher thoughts of the despised Jesus. However, as St. John observes, all this he had done privately, for fear of the

* ἐμαρτυροῦσι τῷ Ἰησοῦ, *discipulos fecit, et adduxit Jesu, confer* Johan. iv. 1. Matth. xxviii. 19. Act. xiv. 21. et ERASMI SCHMIDII *Annotationes ad hunc locum.*

314 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

Jews; and especially his colleagues, who had past a decree to excommunicate all those who should acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah (*f*). This fear of man was indeed a foible; but as he had a well disposed mind, and a sincere love to Christ, God, in this weak instrument, manifested a power which calls for our admiration. While the blessed Jesus was alive, and while he was esteemed, followed and admired, by multitudes, Joseph was a secret disciple, for fear of the Jews; whereas now, when our blessed Saviour was dead, and his cause was desperate, Joseph's fear vanishes, and he publicly shews himself a zealous disciple of Him, whom the Jewish Rulers had crucified. Thus, his faith gave him the victory, and triumphed over the world and the fear of man.

But 2. St. Mark adds: 'He waited for the kingdom of God.' Thus, his mind must have been pretty free from the reigning prejudices of the Jews; for according to their notion, the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a worldly and temporal sovereignty. But Joseph waited for the Kingdom of God, namely, that spiritual kingdom which was to be founded by the Messiah, who himself had declared, that the kingdom of God was come (*g*). Therefore, Joseph was not offended at the sufferings and death of Christ, like those who were filled with chimerical notions of the con-

(*f*) John ix. 22. xii. 42.

(*g*) Mark i. 15.

quests,

quests, pomp, and glory of the Messiah's earthly kingdom.

Fifthly, and *Lastly*, He is described by the regard he shewed to the Lord Jesus. It is said in the Evangelical History, 'He went in boldly 'unto Pilate.' His faith inspired him with courage; and though reason represented to him the many difficulties attending this affair, instead of being deterred by them, he resolved at all events, whatever judgment the public might pass on it, or whatever danger he might incur from the cruelty of our Saviour's enemies, to be wanting in no endeavours for procuring the body of Jesus. And though it could not but be disagreeable to a man of his probity and delicate conscience, to ask a favour of such an unjust and profligate judge; yet he repaired to his hall of judgment, in which the chief Priests and Elders, out of their pharasaical hypocrisy, would not set a foot, and desired leave of Pilate to take down the body of Jesus from the cross, in order to bury it; for this could not be done without a licence from the Roman Governor, who was the supreme Magistrate. But as Christ had been lifted up on the cross, by the sentence of the Magistrate; so it was God's pleasure, that he should be taken down by the same means, namely, by a licence from the Judge. Now Pilate, well knowing that crucified persons often lived two or three days on the cross, wondered to hear that Jesus was already dead; and even that he had expired before

fore an end was put to his life, by breaking his legs. However, having sent for the Centurion who commanded the party of soldiers at the cross, and making a particular enquiry into the affair, he found by the officer that all these circumstances were true. Therefore, when he was assured that Jesus was really dead, he granted Joseph's request.

Who does not in this circumstance see the hand of God, which so wonderfully directed these incidents, that the Roman Governor, by his enquiries, is made the instrument to confirm the certainty of our Saviour's death? Thus, as our blessed Lord, by reason of the enrollment and taxation, was entered in the register of the living under Augustus; so under the Lieutenant of his successor Tiberius, in order to strengthen our faith concerning the reality of Christ's death, he was registered in the list of the dead. Avaricious Governors had, indeed, a practice of selling their licence to bury executed malefactors, at a high rate*. But Pilate gave Joseph the body of Jesus voluntarily, and without any present, which he might have expected from him, as he was a man of wealth and distinction. Upon this, as St. John relates it, ' Joseph came [and with the help of his ' servants] took the body of Jesus' from the cross. With what joy did Joseph receive the permission from Pilate, and how happy did he

* CICERO upbraids *Verres* with this corrupt practice. Vide Orat. x. in *Verrem*, C. 133.

think

think himself in being possessed of the lifeless remains of a person he honoured so much while living ! Here let us pause a while, and, before we proceed, make the following observations.

1. When it so happens, that a part of the public worship of God interferes with a necessary act of charity, and love to Christ and his members, which will admit of no delay, the former may be omitted, and the latter performed with a safe conscience.

Joseph had no reason to entertain any uneasy scruples, because his care for the interment of the Lord Jesus prevented him from assisting in the temple, at the worship which was preparatory to the approaching sabbath. He was now to attend a labour of love which could not be deferred ; and this was infinitely of higher value in the sight of God, than all the numerous sacrifices at that time offered in the temple. Therefore, it would have been an hypocritical show of devotion, had he, out of fear of omitting the temple service, been wanting in this opportunity of shewing his love to Christ. Certainly, the public worship of God ought not to be omitted but on very important occasions, and in cases of urgent necessity. At all other times we are obliged to attend it, and by our devotion set a good example to others. But if, in the time of divine service, an occasion offers of being serviceable to a member of Jesus Christ, of attending on him in his sickness, assisting him under temptations,
or

or helping him in any pressing exigency ; or if the providence of God point out to us an occasion where our charity is immediately required ; the public worship may, for that time, be omitted with a safe conscience. Such a high value does God place on the love of our neighbour, that he as it were postpones his own service, and gives the former the precedence.

2. External probity, and a natural love of justice, though not allowed to be sufficient to make a true Christian, are not at all superseded by the profession of Christianity.

It is true, indeed, that the mere observance of justice and probity does not constitute a Christian. But this declaration is misconstrued by many sectaries and enthusiasts ; who entertain an impious notion, that all external morality is exploded by the Gospel, and that it is no part of the Christian religion to practice the social duties. But we here see, that the Holy Spirit inserts this elogium of Joseph, namely, ' that he was ' a good man and a just,' and consequently was possessed of every moral virtue. It were to be wished, that a natural love for justice was more frequently to be met with among persons in trust and power, who call themselves Christians ; and then the complaints of injury and oppression would not be so common *.

* If those, who amongst us think themselves at the summit of Christian perfection, would condescend to practise and inculcate the heathen virtues and moral duties they exclaim against, it would be happier for themselves and their hearers. *W.*

God, even since the Fall, has left man so much power as is necessary towards leading a social, just, and regular life; and every one is bound to make use of this natural capacity of being virtuous, according to the design of the all-wise Creator; which is, that we should be worthy and useful members of human society. However, morality alone is not sufficient in God's eye to make a man a true Christian, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven (*g*). Honesty and godliness are good and acceptable in the sight of God (*b*), and must go together. When the former is ennobled by the latter, and when we are powerfully restrained from all unworthy and dishonest practices through the fear of God, it is unquestionably one of the greatest ornaments of a Christian. Whereas probity, without the fear of God, is no more than a whited sepulchre, outwardly beautiful and specious, but void of life and intrinsic worth within.

3. He, who is faithful in small things, will be entrusted with greater.

This Gospel maxim we see here confirmed in Joseph of Arimathea. This man was faithful in his natural powers, which God endowed him with, in order to lead a virtuous life. He was faithful in obeying the dictates of his natural conscience, by condemning injustice, and refusing to join in condemning an innocent person to die. He was faithful in the

(*g*) Matth. v. 20.

(*b*) 1 Tim. ii. 2.

improve-

320 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

improvement of the knowledge which he had of the truth of our Saviour's doctrine ; secretly bringing others to follow Christ at a time, when he did not dare publicly to own himself one of his disciples. Behold, how richly he is here rewarded for that fidelity which he shewed in small things, and what a treasure of faith God bestows on him ! For, he publicly goes to Pilate, overcomes the world, and its malicious censures, and shews himself a true disciple of the blessed Jesus when his affairs were seemingly in the most desperate situation, and when there appeared but little hopes that any of the Jewish rulers would ever associate with him again. Oh, that men would make a right use of their natural powers, and pay a greater regard and reverence to the voice of their consciences. Then God would lead them farther, and, by his revealed word, would impart to them the enlivening principle of the spiritual life. For God does not leave the least fidelity of man unrewarded ; but, out of his abundant grace, rewards it with a plentiful measure of Divine assistance. On the contrary, we must not think it strange that he, who does not make a right use of his natural reason, by which he might be enabled to live a quiet, temperate, and virtuous life, should grow more abandoned and increase in his wickedness ; since it is but a righteous judgement of God, that he, who abuses the gifts of heaven and disregards the dictates of conscience, should plunge himself

himself deeper and deeper into sin and infamy.

4. He, that will not risk something for the love he bears to Christ, will never make any great proficiency in the school of Christianity.

It is here said of Joseph that he went in boldly to Pilate, and desired the body of Jesus. Something must be risked in religion, before we can attain to any degree of perfection. In the conflict of Repentance, we must determine to renounce our dearest bosom-sins, to give them a perpetual bill of divorce; and for Christ's sake, to risk our reputation in the world, and perhaps submit to mockery and insults from our former friends. We are to risk something in the good fight of Faith by resolving to rely on the Divine promises and approach the throne of Grace, notwithstanding our unworthiness, which would make it seem hazardous. We are to risk something in entering the combat of Prayer, when Satan places difficulties before us, by insinuating, that God will not hear sinners.

5. The pious, prudent, and resolute undertakings of a true Christian, however hazardous they may appear, will by the Divine assistance be brought to a happy issue.

What could seem more uncertain, and at the same time more dangerous, than this resolution of Joseph to ask for our blessed Saviour's body? Had he considered his own Character,

that of his colleagues, or the character and disposition of Pilate, a thousand apprehensions would have arose in his mind, and deterred him from the attempt. But as he regarded God only when he resolved on it, by the power of his love and faith towards the deceased Jesus, he overcame all difficulties. For as he followed the impulse of his conscience in this enterprise, and recommended the event to God, this hazardous undertaking succeeded; and by it he acquired a jewel, far more precious than any thing he had risked to obtain it. This example should encourage us to an imitation of it; and the happy issue of Joseph's pious, though difficult enterprise, should animate us boldly to venture something for the honour of God. What if affairs seem desperate, and every thing turns contrary to our expectations; yet we shall be no losers by the attempt. We shall have still the testimony of a good conscience, and the honour of having risked something for the sake of Christ; and in the day of retribution, our good will and generous attempts shall not go unrewarded.

6. As the taking down the body of Jesus from the Cross was not only permitted, but even appointed and predicted by God, it is a means for greatly strengthening our faith.

God had ordered (*i*) that a man, who had been hanged as a curse on a tree, should be taken down and buried before sun-set. This was

(*i*) Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

a sign to denote, that his justice was now satisfied by the punishment and disgrace inflicted on the delinquent ; so that the land of Israel might from that time be accounted clean. This was a type of the burial of Christ. The great Surety of mankind had borne our sins in his body on the tree, and become a curse on it for us (*k*). Now as his dead body was by God's own appointment taken down from the Cross, and afterwards honourably interred ; it is an assured sign that the Divine justice is satisfied by our Saviour's death, and that the curse is abolished and done away. If our Redeemer had not paid all to the utmost farthing, justice would not have permitted him to be taken down from the Cross. But as God permitted this, he gave a public testimony to all the world, that his justice was fully satisfied. Hence all who believe in the crucified Jesus, and obey his precepts, are in the eye of God, exempt from the curse of the law, and free from all condemnation (*l*). This comfort is of inestimable value ; but it is only so to the truly penitent and humble Christian.

II.

After our Saviour's body was taken down from the Cross, it was prepared for an honourable interment. We may learn from the Evangelical history,

(*k*) Gal. iii. 13.

(*l*) Rom. viii. 1.

324 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

First, Who the persons were that performed this generous office. These were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph, with his servants, had before taken down the body of Jesus from the cross. But while this pious man was employed in preparing it for interment, the providence of God sent him Nicodemus as a colleague, who was a person of equal distinction with himself. He not only bore his share in the charges, but likewise in the odium and contempt, and other inconveniences, which Joseph might naturally expect on account of this labour of love. It is here observed of Nicodemus, that he formerly came to Jesus by night, and that it was for fear of the Jews. Hence it appears, that he was not free from the weakness which had possessed Joseph of Arimathea. But now he also shews an equal boldness; and the bands of fear in both of them are broken asunder, and shaken off, by the death of Christ. As all Nature publicly sympathised with the Lord Jesus; for the earth trembled and the rocks were rent, as it were to celebrate his obsequies; Nicodemus would not be wanting in shewing his esteem and love to Christ; so that his mind was stirred up to assist in performing the last office for our blessed Lord. The harmonised text informs us

Secondly, That these two persons shared the labour and expence between them. We are told that ' Joseph bought fine linen, in order to
' wrap

'wrap up the body of Jesus;' and that Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrhe and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, and costly spices. The linen was steeped in this aromatic mixture or ointment; and then the body of Jesus being first washed, was wrapped and wound in linen clothes. This preparation of the body of our blessed Saviour for interment had been prefigured in his life (*m*), when a devout woman called Mary anointed him, as it were, for his burial. For on that occasion, our blessed Lord plainly intimated that a like honour would be paid him after his death. Thus he shewed himself a true prophet concerning his death and burial; and an honour was shewn him in the latter, which only the most wealthy among the Jews of that age could afford. The blessed Jesus was born poor, and died so; but he was rich in external ornaments twice during his abode on earth; once soon after his entrance into the world, whither he came poor, naked, and helpless, like the meanest of his brethren; and a second time immediately after his death, which was also accompanied with poverty, nakedness, and ignominy. Soon after our Saviour's birth, some great personages among the Eastern Gentiles presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrhe; and after his death, two persons of wealth and distinction among the Jews anointed him with the most costly aromatics and spices. Thus was

(*m*) John xii. 7.

326 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

the end of his continuance on earth attended with more splendor, than his first entrance upon it. At his birth, when he entered on his state of humiliation, he was wrapped up in mean swadling clothes; but at his burial, when his state of abasement drew towards a period, he was wrapped up in fine linen dipped in the most costly ointments. By this circumstance was literally fulfilled what is said of the Messiah in the forty-fifth Psalm (*n*), 'Thy garments
' [namely thy grave-clothes] smell of myrrhe,
' aloes, and cassia.' Let us now make the following observations on this subject.

1. We may here observe the gradual progress of the spiritual life in Nicodemus, which are particularly taken notice of in the Gospel. He is first described coming by night to Christ, and represented as a child (*o*), who was to learn the very first elements of our Saviour's doctrine. He is afterwards described as a disciple, opposing his wicked colleagues, and saying to them, 'Doth our law judge any man
' before it hear him, and know what he doeth?
' (*p*)' in answer to which question he receives this reprimand, 'Art thou also of Galilee?
' Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth
' no prophet.' But here, at the death of Christ, he appears a spiritual man in his full growth and perfect vigour; who, at a time when the cause of Jesus seemed desperate,

(*n*) Verse 8.

(*o*) John iii. 2.

(*p*) John vii. 50, 51, 52.

publicly

publicly owns himself his disciple, and brings precious aromatics to prepare his body for the burial.

2. No expences are better bestowed than those employed on Christ and his members, either in clothing them when naked, or bestowing on them such other comforts as they want.

O that the rich of this world would well consider this, and bestow some part of their superfluities in works of charity and beneficence! This would bring down a real blessing on them; for what is bestowed on his poor brethren, Christ accepts as if it was bestowed on himself. Nicodemus's expences in magnificent houses, gay equipage, &c. are lost and buried in oblivion. But the expences he was at in burying the Lord Jesus, the vast quantity of rich and costly spices which he contributed on that occasion, are entered in God's book of remembrance, and will be rewarded in the sight of Angels and men at the great day of retribution. Let those rich men, who would be thus happy, tread in his foot-steps; and what they have hitherto superfluously lavished away on vain ornaments, or on their pleasures, let them bestow on Christ's poor brethren, and they shall be openly commended and rewarded by the Son of God, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with myriads of Angels.

3. By long conferring with flesh and blood, we neglect many happy opportunities of doing good to the members of Christ.

The devout women, who had followed the Lord Jesus from Galilee, also brought spices and ointments (*q*), and came to anoint him on that morning when he rose from the dead. But they came too late: for our blessed Lord had already left his grave, and was risen. He who has a mind to do good, let him do it without delay. Good opportunities, like riches, have wings, and fly away before we are aware.

4. Lastly, The imperfections that usually attend our good works are covered by our love to the Lord Jesus, which flows from our faith in him.

It must be allowed, that there was a weakness attending the good offices of these worthy personages. This appears in their anointing the sacred body of the blessed Jesus, in order to preserve it from putrefaction; whereas it was written in the Psalms concerning the Messiah, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy HOLY ONE to see corruption (*r*).' But this weakness is entirely overlooked on account of that cordial love to the Lord Jesus, from which it proceeded. The Spirit of God, instead of representing this foible of entertaining such an erroneous idea of Christ, as a crime, mentions it as the effect of their love and esteem for the deceased, and passes over their weakness. Let

(*q*) Luke xxiii. 56.

(*r*) Psalm xvi. 10.

us therefore pray to our faithful Saviour, That he will shed abroad his love in our hearts, and inflame us with a laudable emulation by the two noble examples, of which we have now been treating.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Faithful Saviour, we thank thee that out of thy transcendent love to our souls, thou hast by thy death descended into such a helpless state, as to stand in need of the assistance of others: Praised be thy name for inclining the hearts of Joseph and Nicodemus to pay the last honours to thy breathless body, after thy painful ignominious death; by which thou hast prefigured that honour which was destined to our bodies, in being made temples of the Holy Spirit. We are assured that if, in following thee, we hold out to the end, even our pain and ignominy will be swallowed up in eternal bliss and glory. Give us a heart to love thee our crucified Saviour, and to rejoice at every opportunity of shewing our love to thee by relieving thy poor members. Grant this for the sake of thy love. Amen.

C O N-

CONSIDERATION XV.

The burial of the LORD JESUS.

‘ (a) **N**OW in the place where he was
 ‘ crucified, there was a garden;
 ‘ and in the garden a new sepulchre, which
 ‘ Joseph had caused to be hewn out of a rock,
 ‘ wherein never man before was laid. Here
 ‘ laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the
 ‘ Jews Preparation-day; for the sepulchre was
 ‘ nigh at hand. And they rolled a great
 ‘ stone to the door of the sepulchre, and
 ‘ departed. And the women also, who
 ‘ came with him from Galilee, followed after.
 ‘ Among these were Mary Magdalene, and
 ‘ Mary the mother of Joses, who sat over a-
 ‘ gainst the sepulchre, and beheld how and
 ‘ where his body was laid. And they returned,
 ‘ and prepared spices and ointments, and rested
 ‘ the sabbath-day, according to the command-
 ‘ ment. Now the next day that followed the
 ‘ day of the preparation, the chief Priests and
 ‘ Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying,
 ‘ Sir, we remember that That Deceiver said,
 ‘ while he was yet alive, After three days I
 ‘ will rise again. Command therefore, that
 ‘ the sepulchre be made sure until the third
 ‘ day; lest his disciples come by night and

(a) Matth. xxvii. 60—66. Mark xv. 46, 47. Luke
 xxiii. 53—56. John xix. 41, 42.

‘ steal him away, and say unto the people,
‘ He is risen from the dead : So the last error
‘ shall be worse than the first. Pilate said
‘ unto them, Ye have a Watch ; go your way,
‘ make it as sure as you can. So they went,
‘ and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the
‘ stone, and setting a Watch.’

In these words we have an account of the interment of the Lord Jesus ; in which are mentioned,

First, The sepulchre, in which the body of our Saviour was deposited.

Secondly, The burial, or interment.

Thirdly, The different behaviour of our Lord’s friends and enemies on this occasion.

I.

The Sepulchre, in which our Saviour’s body was deposited, offers the following particulars to our consideration.

First, The place where this Sepulchre was :

‘ Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden.’ This Sepulchre therefore was in a garden contiguous to Mount Golgotha. The Scripture makes particular mention of three gardens.

1. The garden of Eden, where sin and the curse due to it commenced, by our first parents transgression of God’s command.

2. The garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, which was the scene where the sufferings

ferings of Christ began, by which sin and the curse were to be abolished and done away.

3. This garden, in which, after our Saviour's sufferings, sin and the curse were, as it were, buried with him in his death.

It was not unusual amongst the Orientals to have their sepulchres in their gardens, an instance of which we have in the second book of Kings (*b*), where it is said that King Manasseh was buried in the garden of his own house. But here, the wisdom of God had very particular reasons for appointing the sepulchre of the Redeemer of mankind to be in a garden; by which we were to be put in mind of the garden of Eden. In the latter our first parents, by their disobedience, caused great trouble to our Redeemer; in the former, he was to rest after the conclusion of his sufferings. In the garden of Eden, death acquired a despotic power over the whole human race; in this garden he was divested of his power over us, so that the church may triumphantly cry out, 'O death! where is thy sting?' In the former, the first Adam fell into a deep sleep, during which a wife was formed for him out of his side; in the latter, the second Adam was to repose, that the church, his spotless bride, might likewise derive its origin from him. So wisely has the providence of God directed this circumstance concerning our Saviour's burial.

(*b*) Chap. xxi. 18.

Secondly,

Secondly, The owner of the sepulchre is mentioned by the Evangelists; and this was Joseph of Arimathea, who had requested Pilate that he might be permitted to take down our Saviour's body from the Cross, as we have observed in the last Consideration. This person had been moved by the providence of God, to cause a sepulchre to be hewn out of a rock in his garden, which was near Mount Golgotha. Joseph never imagined that Jesus of Nazareth, whose disciple he was in secret, was to be laid in this sepulchre. But God, to whom all his works are known from the beginning, had this in view, when he inclined the heart of Joseph to make a sepulchre in this garden. It may then be said of Joseph, as Jesus said unto Peter on another occasion, 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter (c).' Joseph's intent was to provide a place of burial for himself and family; but God had a more important design in view, and so directed contingences, that Joseph here made a sepulchre for the Prince of Life. Joseph probably was put in mind of death by this tomb, and meditated on his latter end in this garden. Let us also learn from Joseph, to meditate on our death and resurrection in our walks and gardens. They continually afford us ample subject for such meditations: for every fading flower reminds us of our mortality; and, on the other hand, every blade of grass that dies in

(c) John xiii. 7.

334 CHRIST'S *Sufferings*

winter, and shoots forth again in spring, is, as it were, a preacher of the resurrection.

Thirdly, The following particulars are mentioned concerning our blessed Saviour's sepulchre.

1. It belonged to another person. As our blessed Lord in his life-time, had not a place where he might lay his head; so likewise, in death, he was not possessed of a grave.

2. It was a new sepulchre, in which never any man had been laid. This was a necessary precaution, lest the resurrection of Christ should be ascribed to a wrong cause. If it had been otherwise, his enemies might have ridiculed and depreciated this miracle, by saying, "Possibly some holy prophet had been buried in that sepulchre many centuries ago, and when this Jesus of Nazareth was laid on his bones, he was restored to life, as we have a similar instance in Scripture (*d*)."
God intended to obviate, by this circumstance, such a subterfuge of unbelief.

3. We are farther informed, that this sepulchre was hewn in a rock. This circumstance was likewise directed by the hand of Providence. For had it been in a loose soil, unbelievers, with their usual cavils, might have pretended, that the disciples of Jesus had made a subterraneous passage, and carried off the body, without breaking the seal, &c. by which the out side of it was secured. But the wise providence of God, by this circumstance

(*d*) 2 Kings xiii. 21.

obviated all such cavils against the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection.

Fourthly and lastly, The reason is mentioned why this sepulchre was chosen in preference to any other, in these words: ' Here laid they ' Jesus, therefore, because it was the Jews ' Preparation-day; for the sepulchre was nigh ' at hand.' Indeed, these pious persons, who thus took care of our Saviour's burial, had but little time left. It was within an hour or two of sun-set, when the Jewish Sabbath began, for which some previous preparation was also required. Now as time did not permit them to carry the body of Jesus to any place at a greater distance from Golgotha, there was a necessity of making choice of the nearest sepulchre at hand. But God had before taken care to provide a tomb for his Son in Joseph's garden, which was contiguous to Mount Golgotha. This circumstance likewise signified, that the place where Jesus Christ suffered the greatest ignominy was contiguous to that, which was to be the first theatre of his glory.

II.

The interment of our blessed Lord is briefly related by the Evangelist, in these words: ' There laid they Jesus.' The wealthy Jews were not buried in the manner usual among us, by putting the corps into a coffin, letting it down into the ground, and covering it with earth; but every family of distinction had a kind of vault, consisting of long, narrow cavities

vities cut in a rock. In one of these cavities or niches, which served for a sarcophagus or tomb, the corps, which was wrapped or wound in linen grave-clothes, was put. In this manner the body of the Lord Jesus was laid in one of the cavities of Joseph's new sepulchre. The hatred of his enemies intended him another kind of burial. According to the custom of the Jews, he would, as a crucified person, have been thrown into a pit on Mount Golgotha among the bodies of the most infamous malefactors, and a little earth sprinkled over him. But his state of abasement being now finished, every thing was to tend to his glorification. For the honourable burial of Christ was a kind of intermediate space between his state of abasement, and his exaltation; and therefore it was accompanied, as it were, with the dawn of his approaching glory.

III.

Let us, in the last place, take a view of the different behaviour of the friends and enemies of our blessed Lord on this occasion.

First, Let us consider the behaviour of his Friends. These were,

1. Joseph and Nicodemus; of whom it is said, That, after anointing Jesus, wrapping up his body in fine linen, and laying it in the cavity of a rock, they rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. Their view in this was to prevent the enemies of our

Lord from going into the tomb, lest in their rancour they should abuse even his dead body. Therefore they rolled a great stone before the door of the sepulchre. In the same manner St. John says of Lazarus's sepulchre (e), 'That it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.' Thus they securely shut up the Lord Jesus in the sepulchre, without entertaining any hopes that he would ever rise again, or come out of it alive.

2. Among our Saviour's friends were several devout women, some of whom had followed him from Galilee. For, as they had been witnesses of the death of our blessed Lord, and stood over against his Cross when he gave up the ghost; so they are here witnesses of his burial. These women 'sat over against the sepulchre, and beheld where, and how, his body was laid.' They were the more careful in observing the place, that they might find it again; for they were in some measure strangers at Jerusalem. Now it affords us a further testimony of the reality of our Saviour's death, that these his zealous friends were so near at the time of his burial. For they never would have permitted him to be interred in the sepulchre, had they seen the least signs of life in him. But St. Luke farther observes, 'That they returned, and prepared spices and ointment,' i. e. they went into the city; and bought some precious ointment and spices,

(e) Chap. xi. 38.

before it was night, and consequently before the Sabbath began, in order to anoint the body of Jesus the next day, perhaps more carefully than Joseph and Nicodemus had done, since they were straitened for time. These devout women were far from entertaining any thoughts of our Lord's resurrection; their design was only to pay these honours to the body of a person they had so highly valued, and to preserve it as long as possible from corruption. Lastly, the Evangelist says, that 'they rested on the Sabbath day, according to the commandment.' This shews their innocence and piety; since they punctually observed the law of God, and would not by any means violate it; so that their love for the Lord Jesus, which here as it were, strove for preference with their fear of transgressing the law, must have powerfully urged them, and, like a magnet, have drawn their thoughts to the sepulchre. Such was the behaviour of our Saviour's friends at his burial. We come to consider,

Secondly, The behaviour of his enemies on this occasion. These were,

I. The chief Priests and Pharisees; who did not let their hatred against the Lord Jesus rest even on the Sabbath day, though the devout women mentioned above, shewed their respect to the commandment, by resting on the Sabbath. His enemies went early in the morning of the Sabbath to Pilate, and, instead of attending to the duties of the day, proposed to him this ad-

vice: ' Sir, we remember that That deceiver
' said, while he was yet alive, After three days
' I will rise again. Command therefore that
' the sepulchre may be made sure, until the
' third day ; lest his disciples come by night,
' and steal him away, and say unto the people,
' He is risen from the dead : So the last error
' shall be worse than the first.'

The design of this application to Pilate was, that a seal might be put on the tomb of Jesus, and a party of soldiers appointed to watch it. In order to induce Pilate to comply with their request, they alledged the following reasons.

The first was, the prophecy of Jesus, that he would rise again the third day after his death ; which they had observed and retained better than his own disciples. They could not repeat this prophecy without an invective against Jesus, though he was dead, for they call him a Deceiver. But this circumstance of their extreme caution, even after his death, concerning him whom they exclaim against as a Deceiver and false Prophet, shews that they had in reality quite another opinion of Jesus, though this testimony of their conscience was at present suppressed.

The second reason that they alledged was, their apprehension that our Saviour's disciples would commit some fraud, would come clandestinely and roll away the stone, carry the body away, and lay it in some other unknown sepulchre ; and then spread about a report that

he was risen from the dead. Thus the innocent disciples were, like their Lord and Master, looked upon as evil-doers and impostors. They had been hitherto accounted a simple, and timorous set of men ; but now, such stratagems are apprehended from them, as required great address, courage, and resolution. These false ideas concerning our blessed Lord's disciples proceeded from an ill-grounded fear. This fear had conjured up phantoms and chimera's before their eyes ; though they accused the Christians of being the most visionary set of people in the world.

The third reason they alledged to induce Pilate to secure the sepulchre, was the danger, that ' the last error would be worse than the first.' That is, the report of Jesus being risen again on the third day would, probably, have a worse effect on the people, than his preaching while alive. Thus, these hypocrites intended to oppose the decree of God concerning the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, in order to justify their wicked proceedings in the eyes of the world. But we may reckon among the enemies of the blessed Jesus,

2. Pilate, the Roman governor, with whom the rulers of the Jews in this transaction ' take counsel against the Lord, and against his Messiah or Anointed (*f*). ' As he had before been prevailed on by these rulers to order the crucifixion of Jesus ; so he is now further sol-

(*f*) Psal. ii. 2. Acts iv. 25, 26, 27.

licited by them, to endeavour to prevent his resurrection from the dead. It was not indeed his own interest, that it should be said he had allowed of the crucifixion of so innocent and holy a Man, who afterwards rose again from the dead. Therefore he very willingly consents that a party of Roman soldiers, at the expence of the chief Priests and Elders, should watch the Sepulchre, and secure it in the best manner, as the Jews themselves should direct. The chief Priests were overjoyed when they obtained this permission, and posted a guard before the sepulchre ; and lest they should be bribed to open the tomb, they took the precaution even to seal the stone. Thus, they thought themselves sure of having prevented the resurrection of Jesus, and that they had secured his sacred body in the bands of corruption. These their wicked contrivances were predicted in Scripture long before ; for the Messiah is introduced in the Psalms, making this complaint : ‘ They devise my hurt, ‘ and now that he lieth, [say they] he shall ‘ rise up no more (g).’

But O what a miracle of Divine wisdom ! how deep soever the devil lays his snares, God baffles him by his own instruments ; for all these dispositions of our blessed Lord’s enemies serve only to confirm the truth of his resurrection, which his heavenly Father had long before sealed and decreed. In order to make his triumph

(g) Psal. xli. 7, 8.

more illustrious, God so directed contingences, that the enemies of Christ should receive advice of his resurrection from their own watch; who now with ghastly countenances and trembling limbs come and acquaint them, that Jesus, without any human aid, had broke open the sepulchre, and come forth quite alive; and that at the same time a heavenly effulgence, and a terrible earthquake, had very near struck them dead; so that they were obliged, as soon as they were able, to fly away in confusion from the sepulchre. Such was the behaviour of our Saviour's friends and enemies at his burial.

By way of a closer application of this narrative of our Saviour's interment, we shall here insert a hymn, composed on that subject, and illustrate it with a short paraphrase on every stanza.

I.

Thou, who my sins (a heavy curse!)
Upon the Cross didst bear,
From thence wast to the tomb consign'd
By Joseph's pious care.

II.

O glorious Type, by which the curse
Is far from us remov'd!
By faith we claim the heav'nly prize
Laid up for thy belov'd.

III. Now

III.

Now hast thou drank the bitter cup
Of death, without a groan,
And cloth'd us with thy righteousness,
To stand before thy throne.

IV.

Thy sacred Word, which never fails,
Prefigures things to come ;
The lion's den, th' enormous whale *
There typify'd thy tomb.

V.

Thou like a fruitful corn of wheat
Art to the earth consign'd,
Whence thou shalt rise, and with thee bring
The harvest of mankind.

VI.

Even in thy darksome grave I see
Thy dawn of glory shine,
Which in full blaze on the third morn
Display'd thy pow'r divine.

VII.

Since then my Saviour did descend
Into the tomb, and thence arose,
He made the chambers of the grave
A downy couch of soft repose.

* Daniel in the lion's den, and Jonah in the whale's belly,
prefigured the burial of Christ.

VIII.

As in the Font, I die to sin,
And wash my guilt away,
Grant I may rise, and with thee mount
Unto the realms of day!

I.

Thou, who my sins (a heavy curse!)
Upon the Cross didst bear,
From thence wast to the tomb consign'd
By Joseph's pious care.

Here our thoughts are directed from our Saviour's sepulchre to Mount Golgotha. For, in order to reap any real benefit from the consideration of our Lord's burial, we must reflect on the character and quality in which he hung on the Cross, before he descended into the sepulchre.

He hung on the Cross as the Lamb of God, bearing both the burden of our guilt, and the load of our punishment and curse; so that by undergoing this painful, ignominious death, he might atone for our sins, and satisfy the Divine justice for the innumerable offences committed against it. Now as this Lamb of God was taken down from the Cross, and deposited in a Sepulchre, it is a certain proof that he has suffered all the punishment he deserved on

on our account ; that he has discharged the immense debt, abolished the curse of the Law, and, by the shedding of his precious blood, satisfied the Divine justice. For if justice had any further claim on this sacred Person, it never would have permitted him to be taken down from the Cross, and honourably interred. But as God not only permitted, but even raised up a man of wealth and distinction to be the instrument of it, it is as it were a public declaration, that justice had no further demands on the person who hung on the Cross ; but that the whole enormous sum of the debt of all mankind has been duly and completely discharged. This is a comfort not to be purchased by all the riches of this world ; but it must be appropriated to us only by the medium of faith and repentance, and by being dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (*b*).

II.

O glorious Type, by which the curse
Is far from us remov'd!
By faith we claim the heav'nly prize
Laid up for thy belov'd.

In these words we are reminded of the following passage in the Divine law : ' And if a
' man have committed a sin worthy of death,

(*b*) Rom. vi. 9.

' and

‘and he be to be put to death, and thou hang
 ‘him on a tree; his body shall not re-
 ‘main all night upon the tree, but thou shalt
 ‘in any wise bury him that day, for he that is
 ‘hanged is accursed of God, that thy land be
 ‘not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth
 ‘thee for an inheritance (i).’ That this pre-
 cept alluded to Christ, who was to be hanged
 on the Cross as a curse for us, we are informed
 by St. Paul, in these words: ‘Christ hath re-
 ‘deemed us from the curse of the law, being
 ‘made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed
 ‘is every one that hangeth on a tree (k).’
 What a wonderful ordinance of Providence was
 this! While an Israelite was hanging as a curse
 on a tree, the whole community of which he
 was a member, the whole land of Israel in
 which he lived, was polluted and accounted
 unclean. But God, by allowing that such a
 one should be taken down in the evening and
 buried, signified, that his justice was for that
 time satisfied, by the punishment of the trans-
 gressor; and that the land, where God had thus
 manifested his wrath, was again reconciled to
 him. Jesus bore our curse on the Cross; but,
 in the evening, he was taken down from it
 according to this injunction of the Divine law;
 which was a token that the curse was removed,
 and the land was again clean. Now he,
 who by faith enters into fellowship with Christ,
 becomes a partaker of his death and burial,

(i) Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

(k) Gal. iii. 13.

and

and all the precious fruits accruing from both of them. Such a person is consequently looked on by God, as if he himself had been buried, discharged from the demands of the law, and entirely freed from the curse. Know therefore, ye penitent believers who are in this happy state, that you are clean in the sight of God, and that there is no longer any curse or condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus (1). The curse is abolished and done away by the perfect innocence of your Mediator. Your heavenly Father is reconciled to you by the sufferings of Christ, who hung on the Cross; and satisfaction having been made to his justice by your Surety, he has discharged you from all farther claims. Only approach the throne of Grace, repent of your sins, believe in Christ, and obey his precepts; and ye shall inherit a blessing, instead of a curse.

III.

Now hast thou drank the bitter cup
Of death, without a groan,
And cloth'd us with thy righteousness,
To stand before thy throne.

The burial of Christ is a kind of intermediate state between his death and resurrection, and serves as a confirmation of the truth of

(1) Rom. viii. 1.

both. For, from the burial of Christ it is evident,

First, That he really died, and that there was no collusion in the manner of his death. Now if he really died, then it is certain that he tasted death, and consequently that he really overcame death. Hence it appears, that death had not an absolute power over Jesus the Son of God; nevertheless, Christ having encountered him, it was overcome by him, and swallowed up in victory. The Prince of Life has extracted his venomous sting, which was sin. He not only triumphed over him by the Cross, in his death; but pursued him even into the grave, which is his residence and strong-hold, and there, as it were for the last time, bruised his head. But,

Secondly, It is likewise clear from our blessed Lord's burial, that he really and truly rose again from the dead. By his resurrection he manifested his triumph over death, and put an end to the power of death over himself; he demolished death's strong-hold, and set up the trophies of his victory therein. At the same time, he laid the foundation of our justification; hence St. Paul says, 'That he was raised again for our justification (m).' For as our blessed Saviour was himself justified in his resurrection, *i. e.* he was publicly discharged by the decree of the supreme Judge from all further demands, from suffering any thing farther on

(m) Rom. iv. 25.

account of sin; so all penitent souls, who by faith are found in Him, are justified by his person. Now these comforts spring from Christ's death, the certainty of which, as well as that of his resurrection, is confirmed by his burial.

IV.

Thy sacred Word, which never fails,
 Prefigures things to come;
 The lion's den, th' enormous whale *
 There typify'd thy tomb.

Here we are referred to that part of Scripture, in which the burial of Christ was both predicted and prefigured. That the burial of Christ was foretold in Holy Writ, may be inferred from these words of St. Paul: 'He was buried and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures (n).' Thus, for instance, when it is said in the Psalms, 'Thou wilt not leave my Soul in hell [or in the state of departed souls] neither wilt thou suffer thine HOLY ONE to see corruption (o),' it presupposes that the Messiah was to be laid in the grave, which is the usual place of corruption. Isaiah says, 'that the Messiah made his grave, &c.' and this likewise contains a clear prophecy of the burial of Christ. But his burial is further typified in the Old Testament by two persons men-

* See Note, p. 343. (n) 1 Cor. xv. 4. (o) Psal. xvi. 10.
 tioned

tioned in this hymn, namely, the prophets Daniel and Jonah. The belly of the whale, in which Jonah, after he was thrown into the sea, remained three days and nights, and on the third day was cast forth alive, and without any hurt, was a type of the Sepulchre of Christ, where he was to lie part of three days, well secured and uncorrupted, and from which he was to come out again alive on the third day. Of this we are assured by the Lord Jesus himself in these words: 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (*p*).'
But the Prophet Daniel is a type no less remarkable.

For first, on account of his excellency above the other princes and wise men of the country, he was undeservedly, and out of mere envy, persecuted, and represented to the Idolatrous Darius, as a despiser of his commands. Whereupon,

2. He was cast into the den of lions, the door of which was sealed with the King's signet. But from thence,

3. He was early in the morning taken out alive.

4. He was advanced to greater honour.

5. His enemies were themselves cast as a prey to the hungry lions.

Thus Jesus Christ in like manner was,

(*p*) Matth. xii. 40.

I. Out

1. Out of mere envy, brought before an Idolatrous governor, as a rebel against the Roman Emperor, by the Princes and Rulers of the Jewish people.

2. He was condemned to die, and afterwards laid in a sealed sepulchre. But,

3. He came forth alive early in the morning, and thus was delivered from the jaws of that lion (q) which destroys all things living.

4. He was thereupon crowned with honour and glory, and exalted above all the works of God.

5. His enemies, on the other hand, shall be plunged into the pit of perdition, which they had dug for him. Thus God's truth gloriously displays itself in the burial of our blessed Saviour; and thus several prophecies and types of the Old Testament are accomplished by it.

V.

Thou like a fruitful corn of wheat

Art to the earth consign'd,

Whence thou shalt rise, and with thee bring

The harvest of mankind.

These words bring to our mind what the Lord Jesus himself had foretold of his burial and resurrection. He alludes to his burial by these words: ' Except a corn of wheat fall into the

(q) Psal. xx. 21.

' ground,

'ground, and die, it abideth alone.' He then alludes to his resurrection, by adding, 'but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (r).' By these words our blessed Lord gives us to understand, that his death and burial were no less necessary to his resurrection, than the dying of a corn of wheat is to its vegetation and fertility. For unless the grain be cast into the earth, and given up to corruption, it bringeth forth no fruit; thus, unless Christ had died, and at least been laid in the place of corruption, he could not have acquired for us the grace of God, and a right to eternal life. O the transcendent love of Christ, who, by dying, hath begotten us again to a glorious and an immortal life!

VI.

Even in thy darksome grave I see
Thy dawn of glory shine,
Which in full blaze on the third morn
Display'd thy pow'r divine.

The burial of Christ is to be considered,
First, As a seal of his innocence. Thus both are connected together; hence the prophet says, 'He was with the rich in his death,' *i. e.* 'he was laid in the sepulchre of a rich man, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his Mouth (s).' As

(r) John xii. 24.

(s) Isa. liii. 9.

Jesus, during his life, was infinitely separated from sinners; so in his burial he was to be distinguished from the malefactors who were crucified with him, whose bodies were exposed to birds and beasts of prey, or thrown into a common receptacle for executed bodies, and half covered with earth.

Secondly, The burial of Christ is a mirror of his exaltation, in which we see the dawn of his approaching glorification; since some beams of his glory were displayed at the sepulchre in which his body was laid. At the same time, this is an earnest that the bodies of believers, after the separation of their souls shall rest in their graves under God's particular care, till their resurrection, and glorification, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire (*r*).

VII.

Since then my Saviour did descend
Into the tomb, and thence arose,
He made the chambers of the grave
A downy couch of soft repose.

This is a very comfortable inference which is drawn from our Saviour's burial; namely, that our Grave is thereby sanctified, and changed into a calm and quiet recess for sleep. Anciently the evil Spirits in Demoniac's made

(*r*) 2 Theff. i. 7, 8.

their abode among the Tombs (*s*); and these were the ensigns of their triumphs, which, since the introduction of sin, they had erected among mankind. But since the only-begotten Son of God has condescended to be laid in the grave, the sepulchres are become silent recesses for sleep and rest; and are so far sanctified by his short abode among the tombs, that even the angels of light are not ashamed to appear there (*t*). Who will now dread the grave, since, through Christ, it is made as it were the gloomy passage that leads to the regions of eternal day?

VIII.

As in the Font I die to sin,
And wash my guilt away,
Grant I may rise, and with thee mount
Unto the realms of day!

In these words we are directed to Christ's burial, as a source of comfort. St. Paul says, 'If one died for all, then were all dead (*u*);' hence we may farther infer, that if one was buried, then were all buried. For as the first Adam, in his fall, represented the whole race of mankind; so in the work of redemption, the Second Adam, in his circumcision, crucifixion, death, and burial, was likewise the representative of all mankind. Therefore it is said in

(*s*) Mark v. 5.(*t*) John xx. 12.(*u*) 2 Cor v. 14.

Scripture of believers who enter into the fellowship of the blessed Jesus, 'That they are circumcised with Christ, crucified with Christ, dead with Christ, &c. (x)' To this fellowship with Christ's burial we are brought by baptism; hence St. Paul says, 'that we are buried with him in baptism (y).' For as anciently the whole body was immersed in the water of baptism, and thus as it were buried and concealed for some moments, from the sight of the spectators; this short continuance under the water signified that baptized persons are, as it were, buried with Christ, and consequently are entitled to all the benefits which our Saviour purchased for us by his death and burial. From this intimate union with the buried Jesus, a person that is baptised is to be accounted as one really dead unto sin; and as one who by Christ's passion has really made satisfaction to God's Justice; so that neither sin nor the curse attending it, neither the world nor the devil, dare triumph over him any longer, since he is in Christ Jesus. But our Saviour's burial was followed by his resurrection; so we, that are buried with Christ, must also rise again with him from the grave of sin, and walk in newness of life.

Let us praise our faithful Saviour, who already, as it were, in our infancy has received us into the fellowship of his burial, when we could only lament our misery with tears, but

(x) Rom. vi. 4, 8. Col. ii. 11, 12.

(y) Col. ii. 12.

had not words to express our indigence and request such a benefit of him. But let us, at the same time, enter on a careful examination, whether we are dead unto sin, and whether we are buried with Christ, and made alive to God. The old man must be for ever put off; the sins, which Christ once buried in his grave, are never more to be brought to light again. If we have already done this, let us with a godly sorrow again enter into the fellowship of Christ's death and burial. 'Let us mortify
' our members which are upon the earth;
' fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,
' evil concupiscence, and covetousness; in a
' word, let us put off the old man with his
' deeds (z).' Let us, as those who are dead to the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, adhere to the fellowship of Jesus Christ and his cross. Let us be willing to be 'hid with
' Christ in God; so that when Christ, who is
' our life, shall appear, we may also appear with
' him in glory (a).' To this end, May the living God, for the sake of Jesus Christ his beloved Son, richly bless to us this and all the preceding Considerations, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

(z) Col. iii. 5. 9.

(a) Ibid. v. 3, 4.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Blessed Jesus, who didst submit unto death, and descend into the dark mansions of the dead for our sake, praised be thy name for these demonstrations of thy love. O make us the happy partakers of all the fruits of thy meritorious sufferings, thy death, and thy burial! Ever praised be thy name for the grace which thou hast bestowed upon me in the Consideration of thy manifold sufferings, from thy internal agony in the garden at the Mount of Olives, to thy descent into the silent chambers of the grave. Set thy seal to all the good thoughts, which these Considerations have stirred in our hearts; and may we in life and death, in the hours of suffering and intervals of joy, from thy PASSION derive health, strength, comfort, and blessing! Grant this for the sake of thine everlasting love to mankind. Amen.

A P P E N D I X.

T H E P R I N C E O F L I F E C O N D E M N E D T O D E A T H.

A Fast Sermon preached at *Jena*,

In L E N T 1721.

By J. R A M B A C H, S. T. P.

A P P E N D I X.

MAY the crucified Jesus, for his passion's sake, at this time impart to us divine strength and divine wisdom; and may he give us such a salutary knowledge of the mystery of his condemnation, as may awaken us to faith and repentance! Amen.

‘ In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die (a).’ This, my beloved brethren, was God’s just and solemn menace to our first Parents, in order to deter them from eating of the forbidden tree. This prohibition was not given on account of any noxious quality in the fruit, as some have vainly imagined. It was rather from a paternal care, that God interdicted the use of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of good and evil to the representatives of mankind. These words are therefore to be considered as a judicial sentence, in which God declares to man that, on transgressing this his solemn command by disobedience, he would not only render himself obnoxious to spiritual

(a) Gen. ii. 17.

death,

death, and forfeit the Divine life; but also would incur the whole penalty threatened in these words, and infallibly draw on himself both temporal and eternal death, as a just punishment for his sins.

How dreadfully this judicial threatening has been fulfilled, we are taught by sad experience. For we all enter into this world dead in sin, and deprived of that life which is from God; and we are by a painful temporal death to be removed out of it. Death rules and tyrannizes over all the descendants of fallen Adam, and spares neither age, sex, nor rank; and if no gracious Covenant had intervened, this sentence of the Supreme Law-giver, 'Thou shalt surely die,' would have been executed on the whole human race in its utmost extent; and all of us would have been consigned to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

But the compassionate love and tenderness of our Creator, who has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, with pity saw man, as it were, lying in death, and graciously said, Thou shalt live. For God, immediately after the Fall, promised to send his Son into the world; who should bruise the serpent's head, destroy sin and death, and recover for us a right to the spiritual and eternal life.

But by what arduous steps, by what amazing means, has this redemption been accomplished. It was necessary that this sentence
Thou

A P P E N D I X. 363

‘Thou shalt surely die,’ should be first denounced against our Mediator, before that gracious promise, ‘Thou shalt live,’ could be made to man. It was necessary that He should appear in our stead, as the representative of sinners and transgressors, and submit to the sentence of death; that we might appear before the Divine Tribunal in his stead, and hear the sentence or promise of life from the mouth of his reconciled Father. In this amazing instance, the delinquent is forgiven, and the Surety suffers; and He, who one day will call the dead to life, was himself sentenced to die.

The end of our meeting here on this Fast-day being; as the present season of Lent requires, to consider with seriousness and attention this important part of our blessed Saviour’s sufferings, let us, with united fervours of devotion, call on the living God, that he will be pleased to bless the consideration of this interesting subject to our souls, so that all of us may be richly edified thereby; and to this end let us call upon him saying, ‘Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

The part of the history of the Passion, which is to be the subject of our present discourse, is thus related in the harmonized account of the four Evangelists (*b*).

(*b*) Matth. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xiv.

THE

T H E T E X T.

‘ Now the chief Priests and Elders, and all
‘ the Council, sought false witness against Jesus,
‘ to put him to death ; but found none. Yea,
‘ though many bare false witness against him,
‘ their testimony agreed not together. At the
‘ last came two false witnesses and bare false
‘ testimony against him, saying, We heard him
‘ say, I am able to [I will] destroy this temple
‘ of God that is made with hands, and within
‘ three days I will build another made without
‘ hands. But neither so did their witness agree
‘ together. Then the High Priest stood up in
‘ the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest
‘ thou nothing ? what is it that these witness
‘ against thee ? But Jesus held his peace, and
‘ answered nothing.

‘ Again the High Priest asked Jesus, Art
‘ thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ? I
‘ adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell
‘ us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of
‘ God : Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said ;
‘ I am. Nevertheless I say unto you, Here-
‘ after ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on
‘ the right hand of Power, and coming in the
‘ clouds of heaven.

‘ Then the High Priest rent his clothes,
‘ saying, He has spoken blasphemy, what far-
‘ ther need have we of witnesses ? Behold, now
‘ ye have heard his blasphemy. What think
‘ ye ?

‘ ye? They all condemned him, and answered
‘ and said, He is guilty of death.

‘ Then some began to spit on him, and they
‘ did spit in his face. And the servants, and
‘ the men who held Jesus, mocked him, smote
‘ him, and buffeted him. And they blind-
‘ folded him, and struck him on the face; and
‘ asked him, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou
‘ Christ, who is it that smote thee? And many
‘ other things blasphemously spake they against
‘ him.

‘ And straightway in the morning, as soon
‘ as it was day, the chief Priests, the Elders of
‘ the people, and the Scribes, came together,
‘ and led him into their Council. And they said,
‘ Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said
‘ unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe;
‘ and if I ask you, ye will not answer me, nor
‘ let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man
‘ sit on the right hand of the power of God.
‘ Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of
‘ God? and he said unto them, Ye say that I
‘ am. And they said, What need we any far-
‘ ther witnesses? for we ourselves have heard of
‘ his own mouth.’

Beloved in the Lord!

Among other glorious titles attributed to our
blessed Saviour, that of PRINCE OF LIFE, which
is given to him by St. Peter (c) is a very remark-
able one, ‘ Ye have crucified the Prince of Life,’
says the Apostle to the Jews. Our Saviour

(c) Acts iii. 15.

was,

was, not only by his Divine nature, the source of life in the kingdom of nature, the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory; but, likewise in his human nature, wherein the Father had given to him to have life in himself (*d*). Thus death had no claim on this glorious, this Divine Person, had he not by the grace of God voluntarily determined ‘to taste death for every man (*e*).’ In order to hear the sentence of death pronounced on him, he freely submitted to be brought before the tribunal of man. Of the several circumstances relating to this wonderful event, we have a melancholy account in the harmonised text of the Evangelists cited above, which shews us how the Prince of Life was condemned to death by the Rulers of the Jews.

In explaining these words, we shall

First, Consider what preceded the sentence of death passed on our blessed Saviour.

Secondly, The circumstances with which it was accompanied.

Thirdly, What followed that iniquitous sentence.

O Blessed Jesus, thou Son of the most High God, we intreat thee by thy bitter passion, that thou wouldest assist us with thy grace; that we may continually obey thy precepts, shun all evil, and, to our great edification, meditate on thy meritorious death, and the cause of it! and in

(*d*) John v. 26.

(*e*) Heb. ii. 9.

return for it, though we are poor and weak, deign to accept of our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving!

EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT.

P A R T I.

WE are, in the first place, to consider what preceded the sentence of death, which was passed on the Prince of Life; and this was,

First, the deposition of the false witnesses, and,

Secondly, The glorious confession made by Christ, the true and faithful Witness.

First, As to the depositions of the false witnesses, we shall in the first place, enquire who the judges were, before whom those witnesses delivered their evidence. These, as the Text informs us, were the chief Priests and the Elders, and the whole Sanhedrim or great Council, *i. e.* the whole Ecclesiastical Consistory of the Jews. This council was composed of the chief Priests and the Elders, to whom also were joined the Scribes, or interpreters of the Law; for in other passages of the Gospel-history they are expressly mentioned as composing part of the council (*f*). Of these members of the council, some were Ecclesiastics, others were Lay-men; but at that time both the Priests and the Laity among the Jews were ex-

(*f*) Matth. xxvi. 57. Luke xxii. 66.

tremely

tremely corrupt and depraved. As for the dispositions of the great Council at the time of the Messiah, and their behaviour towards Him whom the Lord anointed King in Sion, it had long since been foretold by the Prophet Zephaniah (*g*), ‘ That the Princes of Jerusalem,’ *i. e.* the chief Priests and President of the Council, ‘ were roaring lions ; that her judges,’ *i. e.* the other assessors and Elders ‘ were ravening wolves’ (and on this occasion they assembled in the night like wolves.) The prophetic Spirit likewise adds, ‘ Her Prophets, or Scribes ‘ and Lawyers, are light and treacherous persons ; her Priests have polluted the Sanctuary,’ *i. e.* they reviled the Messiah, the most sacred Sanctuary of Israel (*h*), and represented him as a blasphemer, ‘ and done violence to ‘ the Law.’ So degenerate and base was the Sanhedrim or Supreme Council of the Jews, which had formerly been so highly revered, that their decrees were looked upon as the decrees of God. Thus the most sacred and respectable ordinances of God may be perverted and profaned by impious men. Who now will suffer himself to be dazzled by the high stations of men, and to be awed by the authority of councils, synods, &c. Since the Son of God is here unanimously condemned to die as a blasphemer, by a very numerous and august assembly?

Before this spiritual tribunal witnesses are produced against the Lord Jesus ; for the Evan-

(*g*) Chap. iii. 3, 4.

(*h*) Isaiah viii. 14.

gelist observes, that ' the whole Council sought ' false witness against Jesus to put him to ' death (i).' These iniquitous judges were long before determined to destroy Jesus of Nazareth at any rate, who had so frequently disturbed their carnal security; who had reproached them for their hypocrisy, pride, and covetousness, and by driving the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, had curtailed their profits. Besides, by his holy and exemplary life, he had disgraced their worldly, sensual, and sinful conversation.

In order to preserve the appearance of proceeding in all things according to the letter of the Law of Moses, and consequently according to justice and equity, they indeed produced witnesses; especially as the blessed Jesus, at his examination, had himself insisted on this point, and required that they should ask them who heard him, concerning his doctrine (k). But St. Matthew stigmatizes the evidence by calling them ' false witnesses,' and their deposition a false testimony. It is therefore very probable, that they had either been suborned with money, or allured by promises; or perhaps they might, of their own accord, out of an inveterate malice against Jesus, or hopes of worldly advantages, come into court, and formally depose the impious fictions they had contrived. For where there are unjust rulers and

(i) Matth. xxvi. 59.

(k) John xviii. 21.

370 A P P E N D I X.

judges, there will not be wanting abandoned wretches, who, for a morsel of bread, will be the tools of their iniquity, and lay aside all regard to truth and conscience. Of this the Messiah complains, by the mouth of the Psalmist in these words (*l*): ‘ Yea, the abjects gathered
‘ themselves together against me, and I knew
‘ it not; they did tear me [or wrested my
‘ words] and ceased not. With hypocritical
‘ mockers, they gnashed upon me with their
‘ teeth. Mine enemies speak evil of me:
‘ When shall he die and his name perish (*m*)?’
Thus it is said in the text, ‘ They sought false
‘ witness against Jesus to put him to death.’
This is predicted in the 6th and 7th verses of this Psalm, the meaning of which seems to be this: “ When they [come to see and exa-
“ mine my cause judicially, they speak false-
“ hood; they gather to themselves iniquity in
“ their hearts, and endeavour to collect a mul-
“ titude of crimes, which are only the inven-
“ tions of their own false hearts; then they ap-
“ pear in court, and openly declare them as cer-
“ tain truths.” In which words, the Spirit of prophecy has given a lively representation of the iniquitous trial of our Saviour, in Caiaphas’s house.

The Law of Moses, indeed, required but two or three witnesses to give evidence in the trial of a person for a capital offence; but here whole troops of false witnesses rose up against

(*l*) Psal. xxxv. 15, 16.

(*m*) Psal. xli. 5.

the soul of the Righteous (*n*). However, all their depositions afforded not so much as the appearance of any thing, by which Jesus could be legally condemned to Death. For their testimony did not agree, and one witness immediately invalidated what another had just declared. Thus God here fulfilled what David, a lively type of Christ, had once prayed for: 'Divide their tongues, O Lord (*o*).' Thus the purity of our blessed Saviour's doctrine, and the sanctity of his life, shone out with superior lustre, notwithstanding all the vile practices and black calumnies of those who were for obscuring his character. Our blessed Lord might therefore say on this occasion also, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin (*p*)?' Thus does innocence appear triumphant amidst its enemies; and it is a very difficult task for the persecutors of truth to oppress it, with any shadow of justice or equity. O the immense value of a good conscience, which braves the tempest like a firm and immoveable rock! for when the foaming waves beat against it, they only dash themselves to pieces.

However, it might be a just occasion of wonder, if hell should want engines for accomplishing any wicked design. At last, two false witnesses are found, (and these perhaps were members of the council) who confidently came forth, as if they had been sure of carrying their

(*n*) Psal. xciv. 21.

(*o*) Psal. lv. 9.

(*p*) John viii. 46.

point. These miscreants depose, That they heard from our Saviour's own mouth, words, which contained a horrid blasphemy. They here alluded to the words that Christ had spoken soon after his entrance on his public ministerial office, which were still fresh in their memory; it being a saying which they could not well digest. Our blessed Lord's words to which they hinted at, were these: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (q).' Jesus, in these words, spoke of the temple of his body, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead. He had foretold, that the Jews would indeed destroy his body by death; but that, on the third day, he would again raise it up by his resurrection. But these flagitious witnesses treated our blessed Saviour's innocent words as, in our days, the world usually deals with those of the witnesses of the truth; they scandalously perverted them, wrested them from their true meaning, and quoted them without any regard to truth, justice, or equity. For,

1. Christ had said, 'Destroy this temple:' But they pretend that they had heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple.'

2. Jesus spoke of the temple of his body, and probably pointed to it with his hand, when he uttered these words; but they charge him with having spoken of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem.

(q) John ii. 19.

3. They

3. They add, 'that is made with hands;' words which our blessed Saviour never uttered: For he spoke of his body, which St. Paul terms 'a tabernacle not made with hands (r).'

4. And lastly, They falsely pretend that Jesus said, he would erect 'another temple made without hands;' whereas our blessed Lord only declared, that he would raise up the demolished temple of his own body in three days. This may be looked upon as a master-piece of knavery and prevarication. However, even the fuliginous vapour of this black calumny, vented in a four-fold falsehood, could not obscure the innocence of the Eternal Truth. For after all, it is said by the Evangelist (s), 'But neither so did their witness agree together.' Their testimony did not agree with the sound and sense of the words, which Jesus had spoken; nor did they even agree with one another. But if they had absolutely agreed with each other, and proved that Jesus had spoken the very words according to the meaning they had affixed to them; yet that would not have been a sufficient cause to pass a capital sentence on Jesus, and consequently did not answer the purpose of the Jewish council: For 'they sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death;' and for this the depositions were not sufficient. For, supposing that Jesus had spoken these words of their temple, the greatest guilt he could have incurred, if he failed in the

(r) Heb. ix. 11.

(s) Mark xiv. 59.

work, would have been that of an arrogant temerity; which is by, no means punishable with death. But if he had made good his words, and within three days rebuilt them another temple, where would have been the great damage? What loss would they have sustained? Must they not have acknowledged this to be a proof of his supernatural and Divine power? Lastly, to alledge such a crime against Jesus would have proved of no effect before Pilate, the Roman Governor, who would have made a jest of it. Thus the Jewish Rulers were perplexed in their wicked machinations, and confounded and baffled by their own witnesses, the tools they employed to compass their impious designs. Having thus considered the depositions of these false witnesses, we come,

Secondly, To consider the glorious confession made by Christ, the true and faithful Witness.

In the mean time, the High Priest, who, like a ravenous wolf, thirsted after innocent blood, grew impatient; and as his witnesses were of no avail to him, he goes about to extort a subject, on which he might found a capital sentence, from our blessed Lord's own mouth. Hitherto the Lamb of God, having with a silent mildness and serenity heard all these wicked accusations which confuted themselves, and the falsity of which was manifest to the judges own consciences, had returned no answer in justification of himself. Thus, by his silence, he expiated the sinful apology of the
first

first Adam, (who was for vindicating himself against God's just accusations) and, at the same time, manifested his willingness to suffer death. At length the High Priest adjures him by the living God to declare, whether he is the Christ, the Son of the Most High. By this behaviour his design was, as it were, to bring the conscience of the accused to the torture, in order to come at the truth; not that he intended to believe and acquiesce in his confession, but that he might make use of it for compassing his impious and bloody design. For it had long before been declared by the great Council, that Jesus was not the Messiah or Christ, but a mover of sedition; and a decree had been passed by that assembly, to excommunicate all that acknowledged him as the Messiah or Christ (*t*). Alas! how must the heart of the Lord Jesus been affected at this adjuration! He is here accounted a sly dissembler, who concealed the truth. He hears the sacred Name of his heavenly Father scandalously abused; that awful Name for which he had so profound a reverence.

And now, our blessed Saviour, the faithful and true Witness, no longer thought proper to be silent; but made a good confession, though he well foresaw what a storm of wrath and indignation it would raise in the Council. For being asked this question: 'Art thou the Christ the Son of God?' he shewed himself to be

(*t*) John ix. 22.

the person, who was come into the world to bear witness to the truth (*u*), and had said by the mouth of the Psalmist, ‘ I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest; I have not concealed thy truth from the great congregation (*x*).’ He acknowledges and owns the truth. And as John the Baptist, his forerunner, had said, ‘ I am not the Christ (*y*),’ Jesus, on the contrary, answers to the High Priest, in these words: ‘ Thou hast said, I am,’ *i. e.* It is as you say, I am the Saviour of the world promised by God, the true and only begotten Son of my Father. ‘ Hereafter, continues our blessed Lord, shall ye see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ The import of these words seems to be this: “ I now stand, indeed, before your tribunal, “ as a despised son of man; and, on this account, instead of giving credit to my confession, you exclaim against it as blasphemous. “ But I declare unto you before it comes to pass (so that you will not be able to plead ignorance) that within a few days, I shall be “ in a quite different situation from that in which I appear at present. For, after I am “ risen again from the dead, I shall seat myself on my Father’s right hand, and jointly “ with him, hold the reins of universal dominion. My Father, for whose honour

(*u*) John xviii. 37.(*x*) Psal. xl. 9.(*y*) John i. 20. iii. 28.

“ you

“ you blindly imagine yourselves so zealous,
 “ and suppose that in condemning me to death,
 “ you do him an acceptable service ; He, I say,
 “ after all my sufferings and disgrace, will
 “ again glorify me as his Son, will exalt me
 “ above all angels and created beings, and com-
 “ mit all power to me both in heaven and in
 “ earth. After that, I shall appear in the clouds
 “ of heaven, as on my triumphal car, and
 “ will set up my spiritual kingdom, and ma-
 “ nifest my power, before my friends and
 “ enemies. This coming of the Son of Man
 “ in his kingdom, some of you shall live to
 “ see (z), and shall feel and experience such
 “ proofs and tokens of my exaltation, as (un-
 “ less you obstinately persist in your unbelief)
 “ will fill you with unspeakable terror and
 “ amazement.” By this answer, our blessed
 Saviour refers his judges to a passage in the
 Psalms (a), and another in the prophecy of
 Daniel (b), where the Messiah is described as
 sitting on the right hand of God, and coming
 in the clouds of heaven.

The same noble confession is repeated by
 our blessed Lord the following morning, when
 he is again brought before the great Council,
 and asked the same question, namely, ‘ Art
 ‘ thou the Christ, tell us ?’ Now as Jesus had
 before signified to the Jewish rulers the injus-
 tice of their proceedings against him, since

(z) Matth. xvi 28.

(a) Psal. cx. 1.

(b) Dan. vii. 13, 14.

they

they were determined to put him to death, whatever defence he might make to clear himself from their accusations. He a second time tells them, that 'Hereafter they should see 'the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of 'God, and receiving power to shed abroad his 'Holy Spirit on his Apostles, and to set up 'his kingdom among Jews and Gentiles all 'over the world ; but, at the same time, to punish and destroy his enemies.' Hence, on the High Priest's asking him this question a second time, 'Art thou the Son of God?' he again answered, 'Thou sayest it, I am.'

O faithful Saviour ! thus with thy silence hast thou atoned for our unnecessary words, and with thy candid confession our prevaricating evasions, if we duly repent of them, and believe in thy name ! At the same time, thou hast left us an illustrious example confidently to declare the truth whatever may be the consequences, and to fear no dangers, nor even death itself, when we are called upon to bear witness to the truth. Thus I have shewn you what preceded the condemnation of our blessed Saviour.

P A R T II.

Let us now, my beloved, in the second place, take a view of the circumstances which accompanied the sentence of death passed on our blessed Lord. In order to pronounce sentence of death, it was necessary first to prove the
the

the prisoner guilty of some capital crime, that deserved such punishment. We must therefore here enquire,

First, Into the crime laid to the charge of our Saviour, and

Secondly, The sentence passed in consequence of that charge.

The crime, of which our great High Priest stood accused, was blasphemy. For when he had openly confessed that he was Christ, the Son of the Most High God, and that, within a short time, he would sit on the right hand of his Father, and come in the clouds of heaven, as his triumphal car; Caiphas cried out, 'He hath spoken blasphemy, What farther need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.' The sin of blasphemy consists either in speaking irreverently and contemptuously of God, or in appropriating to ourselves what essentially belongs to God; a robbery and presumptuous audaciousness, not to be thought of without horror. Now as the High Priest took Jesus for a mere man, and yet heard him give himself out to be the Son of God, and, by assuming a seat on God's throne, make himself equal with God; he concluded that he blasphemed, and consequently deserved to die. That this dreadful accusation might have the more specious appearance, and make the stronger impression on the other members of the great council, the High Priest rent his clothes. This was customary

tomary among the Jews, as a token of extreme grief, or to testify their abhorrence of any blasphemous expressions they happened to hear. Thus Jacob rent his clothes on hearing of Joseph's death (*c*), and Hezekiah did the same, when he was informed of Rabshakeh's blasphemous expressions against the God of Israel (*d*). This hypocritical behaviour bore an appearance of a singular zeal for God's honour; and the High Priest intended by it to signify, that his heart was pierced, and, as it were, rent with grief and indignation, by the horrible blasphemy which he had just heard. But in reality, this extravagant rending his garment was an outward act of the most wicked grimace and hypocrisy; for this iniquitous and blood-thirsty judge was inwardly glad at his heart, that he had got some foundation to pass sentence of death on the innocent Jesus.

Reflect, my brethren, whether our blessed Saviour was not in these circumstances to atone, on condition of our faith and repentance, for the hypocrisy of joining in the outward ceremonies of Divine worship, without the real devotion of the heart; of feigning seriousness and contrition, and strictly to keep fast-days, &c. when at the same time the heart, instead of being duly affected, with all this outward show remains depraved, corrupt, and unbroken; basks in the love of the world, and its sinful pleasures; and notwithstanding all these outward formalities, by

(*c*) Gen. xxxvii. 34.(*d*) 2 Kings xix. 1.

new sins crucifies the Son of God afresh. Oh, that every one here, who finds this to be his own case, may humble himself before his Saviour, and penitently implore the forgiveness of such wicked, such detestable hypocrisy!

Secondly, Upon this supposed crime the whole spiritual court of the Jews proceed to pass sentence. For when the high Priest puts the question, ‘What think ye?’ in order to collect the suffrages of the members of the council, they unanimously cry out, ‘He is guilty of death.’ They do not previously enquire whether the confession of Jesus is to be accounted blasphemy; this they take for granted, and declare him from whose mouth such words proceed, to be guilty of death. They make the Divine law the pretence for passing this iniquitous sentence; for it is said in Leviticus, ‘He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall surely be put to death (e).’ In conformity to this law, [against which, according to the interpretation of the Jewish Doctors, those who denied the unity, holiness, or truth of the Divine Being were supposed to transgress] they all judged, That the Prince of Life, by assuming to himself divine honours and the title of the Son of God, according to justice and equity, ought to be put to death. And though the good Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, if they were present, might protest against such iniquitous proceedings, and de-

(e) Levit. xxiv. 16.

382 A P P E N D I X.

clare their disapprobation of them (*f*); it was to no purpose, they were out-voted by a very great majority. It was therefore decreed by the Council, That he was guilty of death.

A few hours after, when the morning was come, this sentence was ratified. For as Jesus repeated his confession that he was the Son of God, the Council confirmed their decree, and said one to another, What farther need have we of witnesses, we ourselves have heard it from his mouth. As if they had said, Since he has repeated his blasphemy, though we have allowed him some hours for recollection, and still persists in it, we judge it proper to confirm the sentence; as he has blasphemed the name of God, he must die the death.

Thus did the builders reject that most precious corner Stone, which God had determined to lay in Sion. Thus was the Hope of Israel, and the Desire of nations, condemned by his own people. Thus was the Captain of Salvation, and the Prince of Life, sentenced to death by a wicked abuse of the Divine law. O dreadful and unheard of transaction! that the great Angel of the Covenant, who himself had given the law on Mount Sinai, should be condemned as a transgressor of the law; and that He, by whose Spirit the Holy Scripture was inspired, should be declared guilty of blasphemy, and sentenced to die from that Scripture. Let none henceforth take offence at

(*f*) Luke xxiii. 50, 51.

A P P E N D I X. 383

seeing how often the witnesses of truth are still condemned to die by ignorant zealots, through their false expositions and misapplications of the Holy Scripture.

P A R T III.

Many useful observations might be here made on this extraordinary sentence ; but as the time allowed for discourses delivered from the pulpit will not permit, it is necessary that we should proceed, in the third place, to take into consideration what followed after sentence was pronounced on our blessed Saviour.

When the Sanhedrim or great council of the Jews had passed sentence of death on our blessed Lord, as a blasphemer, the assembly broke up, for the night was pretty far spent, and left Jesus in the hands of their servants ; who passed the remainder of the night in treating the Son of the most high God, with infernal abuse, outrages, and indignities. Concerning this circumstance it is said in the Text, ‘ And the men who held Jesus mocked him, ‘ smote him, and buffeted him, and spit in ‘ his face. And they blindfolded him, and ‘ struck him on the face with the palms of their ‘ hands, and asked him, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who it is that smote thee ? And many other things blasphemously ‘ spake they against him.’

I sincerely

I sincerely acknowledge, dearly beloved, my incapacity to unfold this mystery of impiety, this work of darkness; nor can I form to myself an adequate idea of the monstrous indignities, which the Lord of Glory suffered during this night from the engines of Satan. Only consider, ye devout and pious souls, that if a servant could, in the presence of the whole council, and all the respectable assessors, presume to strike our glorious Redeemer on the face; consider, I say, to what enormous lengths these shameless miscreants would run, when they had him alone, when he was given up to their brutal insolence, and when no body was present who would in the least check their inhuman rage. Unquestionably there were present on this occasion, a greater number of evil spirits than of men; and the former directed the hands and tongues of this riotous multitude, that all the indignities which hell could contrive might be put on our dear Redeemer. This was the black hour, when the prince of darkness and his apostate angels were let loose against the Son of God, and loaded the humble patience and gentleness of this Divine person with the vilest abuses and most shocking indignities.

Here that sacred Person, who was to bruise the serpent's head, suffered the sharpest of its envenomed stings both in body and mind.

His exalted prophetic office, for which his Father had anointed him, and bestowed on him

him the gift of wisdom without measure, was most impiously mocked, and consequently his mind must have suffered extreme anguish. For his eyes, being covered with a bandage, those who struck him with their impious hands said, ‘ Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, ‘ who it is that struck thee.’ How must the heart of the blessed Jesus have been affected at this monstrous impiety ! How many melancholy looks did he cast on these outrageous miscreants, but without any other effect than inflaming their brutal insolence ! Sometimes his cheeks were red and inflamed with their inhuman buffetings ; at other times, they became pale at the horrid impiety of these infatuated wretches, and the thoughts of the heavy judgments that were to come upon them.

Our blessed Lord must likewise have suffered in his sacred body ; and every one of his five senses must have conveyed painful sensations, in order to expiate those sins, which men commit by the indulgence and abuse of their senses. As we so often turn our eyes to forbidden objects, and give a free scope to wanton glances ; so he suffers his innocent dove-like eyes to be insultingly blind-folded and covered. As we take a pleasure in listening with our ears to lies and flanders, to profane jests and impure ribaldry ; so he was obliged to hear the most horrible sarcasms and bitter invectives. His smell was offended with the stench of the loathsome spittle, that was cast in his sacred face

by these inhuman wretches. His taste was offended by the vinegar and gall, which they afterwards gave him to drink. His feeling was offended by the strokes and blows, which he patiently endured ; and all this he underwent to atone, upon our repentance, for all those kinds of voluptuousness and delicacy which are committed by the senses, and to facilitate to us the denial of all sinful gratifications.

But who can sufficiently admire the patience and gentleness which the Son of God shewed amidst all these indignities, mockeries, and outrages? Alas, how full of resentment are we poor, sinful worms, when, according to the modern phrase, our honour is touched! How do these men of honour kindle into a flame of rage, at the least uncourteous word! They make it a point neither to bear nor forgive any injury or affront; and the least offence must be revenged by a law-suit or the sword, and atoned for by blood. And he who should be so unfashionable as to forbear either the one or the other of these methods of revenge, would be judged a person void of spirit, and lost to all sense of honour. O wretched ambition, proud madness and frenzy! How dare such men mention the name of Christ, who look on the imitation of his patience and gentleness as a scandalous meanness of spirit! For, according to their wretched notions of honour, they must account the ever-glorious Son of God himself to have been a mean-spirited person ; since he

I

patiently

patiently put up even with blows and insults, without offering to avenge himself, or to make the least resistance.

Here the Lord of glory, before whom the cherubim themselves veil their effulgent faces, stands with his face bound and covered by way of mockery, and so disfigured with spittle, outrages, and blows, as not to be known. His ears ring with the most prophane blasphemies, the most virulent sarcasms, the bitterest invectives; and his sacred head, worthy of unperishable crowns and diadems, is struck and buffeted with innumerable blows. But if we could see into the thoughts of his heart, we should stand amazed at the placid tranquillity of his heavenly mind. No thoughts of revenge are harboured there; no invective proceeds from his sacred lips. ‘He is as a deaf man that doth not hear, and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth, and as one in whose mouth are no reproofs (f).’

All these outrages he receives, not as proceeding from men; but from the just hand of his heavenly Father, as punishments for the immense debt of our sins, which he, who was our Surety, had taken on himself to discharge. This was not a patience and magnanimity merely heroical, nor a passive submission of a timorous spirit. On the contrary, it was a most perfect sacrifice to the will of God; and the most absolute willingness to fulfil the

(f) Psalm xxxviii. 13, 14.

388 A P P E N D I X.

Scriptures, to drink the cup of sufferings, and to glorify his Father's name. Oh, that this sight of the mocked, insulted, and outraged Jesus may shame our resentful tempers, and mollify the pride and rancour of our obdurate, unrelenting hearts.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

THUS, my beloved brethren, we have seen the Prince of Life condemned by the Jewish rulers to suffer death. We have heard both the depositions of the false witnesses, and his own glorious confession. We have observed how he was condemned to die, as a blasphemer. Lastly, we have viewed him amidst the cruel mockery, and the inhuman outrages, of the brutal soldiers and servants. Let us, my beloved in the Lord, still dwell a little longer on this affecting spectacle; and draw from it some inferences, in order to induce us,

First, To express a hearty sorrow for our sins, and

Secondly, To encourage us to a filial confidence, and a joyful faith in God.

First then, it is to be supposed that Jesus was, in his own person, perfectly innocent and without sin; and consequently did not suffer all these indignities and injurious treatment for any transgressions of his own. For though the Sanhedrim or Council of the Jews declared

clared him a blasphemer, and accused him of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven ; yet it is evident to every one, that this was the accursed effect of envy and malice, and consequently the charge was void of any real foundation. For what an extravagant inference was that drawn on another occasion by these men who were his judges? Namely,

‘ This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day (g),’ and even opposeth us who have the honour of God so much at heart. If he be not of God, he belongs to the devil ; and as he belongs to the devil, there cannot be a more horrid blasphemy than his pretending to be the Son of God.

But the blessed Jesus was otherwise manifested in the consciences of his enemies ; as Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews, confessed when he spoke these words to Christ, in the name of them all, ‘ Rabbi, or Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him (h).’ Our blessed Lord might with confidence say, to the face of his most inveterate enemies and malicious slanderers, ‘ I have not a devil ; but I honour my Father, and ye dishonour me (i).’ He could in his filial and affectionate converse with his heavenly Father even say, ‘ I have glorified thee on earth ; I have finished the work

(g) John ix. 16.

(h) John iii. 2.

(i) John viii. 49.

‘ which thou gavest me to do. And now,
 ‘ O Father, glorify thou me with thine own
 ‘ self, with the glory which I had with thee
 ‘ before the world was (*k*).’ Could a blasphemer dare to converse in such language with the omniscient God? And would God have raised from the dead, visibly taken up to heaven, crowned with praise and honour, and placed on his own right hand, a person who had robbed him of his honour, and usurped his prerogative? It is therefore evident that Jesus was innocent; and consequently deserved no sentence of death, no rude mockeries, insults, and blows.

Do you ask, my brethren, what was the cause of all those inhuman outrages committed against the Son of God? My answer is: Alas! for your sins and mine he was smitten and afflicted. Nay Christ himself answers you in the words of the Prophet: ‘ Thou hast made me
 ‘ to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied
 ‘ me with thine iniquities (*l*).’

As for the cause of his being sentenced as a blasphemer for making himself the Son of God, it is to be sought for in the Fall of our first Parents, of which we have all been partakers. Man, in the state of innocence, was his Creator’s beloved Child; but instead of being satisfied with that glorious privilege, he was for mounting higher; he was for attaining to the summit of Divine Perfection, and be-

(*k*) John xvii. 4, 5.

(*l*) Isaiah xliii. 24.

ing equal to God himself, the great Author of his Being. Seduced by Satan he, with the most impious arrogance, sought to deprive his Creator of the honour and pre-eminence due to him, to ascend his exalted throne, and to seat himself there as an equal with God. But he thereby became like the devil, at whose instigation he fell, and rendered himself obnoxious to temporal and eternal death.

Now for the atonement of these horrid sins, committed by the human race, the true and essential Son of God, 'who accounted it not robbery to be equal with God,' was not only to empty himself of his Divine Glory; but also to suffer himself to be sentenced to death, as a blasphemer who deified himself. And this he did to expiate our presumption in endeavouring to make ourselves as Gods by knowing good and evil, and again to acquire for us the glorious liberty of being the sons of God. How many thousands presumptuously pretend to be the children of God, and would fain be accounted such by others, who are utter strangers to the purity and holiness required in the Gospel? To atone for this sin, if such men sincerely repent of their presumptuous arrogance and spiritual pride, the only Son of God was in this afflictive manner to satisfy God's offended justice, and not only to suffer his real Godhead, which he held of the Father by eternal generation, to be reviled; but likewise to permit

the glorious character of his Divine Sonship to be ridiculed and reviled ; nay, he suffered this indignity from the meanest slaves, on whom he himself had bestowed life, and breath, and power to insult him.

Therefore when we see, with the eye of faith, our dear Redeemer standing before the tribunal of the wicked, insulted and beaten by the licentious servants, and his awful and benign countenance covered with their loathsome spittle ; we are not to suppose that all we have to do is to pity our suffering Saviour ; to bewail him with lamentations and tears ; and to express our indignation against the servants and soldiers, who thus treated him, by curses and execrations. For though they so horribly sinned against the Son of God, yet were they only the instruments to inflict those indignities, which our sins brought on him ; for they laid on him the iniquities of us all, and he was bruised for our transgressions. By our sins, we all assisted at this infernal carnival. By our sins, we also mocked and struck the Prince of Life, and, as it were, spit in the face of him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Our sins were present, and consequently shared in the impious rage and violence, which these miscreants committed against the innocent Lamb of God.

Alas,

Alas, my beloved brethren, did we rightly consider this, it would be impossible, that we should walk so carelessly and find such delight in sin! “ Supposing, a malefactor (to borrow “ the words of Luther, who makes this comparison *) was to be executed for murdering “ the son of a Prince, or King, and in the “ mean time, thou, O sinner, wert carelessly singing and revelling till thou wert seized by “ the officers of justice, and convicted of having “ aided the assassin as an accomplice to perpetrate the murder: With what agonizing “ terrors wouldest thou be filled, especially if “ thy conscience likewise flew in thy face, and “ confirmed the accusation? With much more “ violent convulsions ought thy guilty mind to “ be agitated, when thou art reflecting on “ the sufferings of Christ. For the wicked “ Jews, were the servants of thy sins, and “ thou in reality art he, who by his sins “ hath put to death and crucified the Son of “ God.” But alas! what will be done to the sinner, since God’s beloved Son has been thus rigorously treated? He experienced no clemency, or alleviation of his sufferings. As he had taken on himself the enormous guilt of our blasphemies, our haughtiness and presumption, our sensuality and depravation, and allowed that they should be imputed to him, as our Security; he was looked on and treated no otherwise, than if he himself had committed

* In his Sermon on the Sufferings of Christ.

these

these and the like sins, and consequently the innocent Jesus suffered the punishment of them, instead of the guilty.

Dost thou not see, O wretched sinner, the rigorous severity of God, and his insupportable wrath against the heinous, wicked ways of men? And wilt thou still sport and play with sin as a darling bosom-child, when so glorious a Person has suffered so much, and laid down his life on account of it? or dost thou vainly imagine that the Son of God suffered himself to be sentenced to die, to be mocked, insulted, buffeted, and spit upon, merely to procure for thee the privilege of sinning with impunity? Dost thou suppose that this stupendous transaction came to pass that thou mightest have the liberty of doing evil, and going on in trespasses and sins? How vain and groundless is the imagination! for it has not so much as a shadow of probability on its side. The adorable Person, who was crucified for thy sins, teaches thee to draw another kind of inference from his unspeakable sufferings: For when he was led to his crucifixion, he spoke these memorable and pathetic words: ‘ If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry (m)?’ If God has not spared his only, his beloved Son, when he took on himself the guilt of, and atoned for, the sins of others, what rational hopes canst thou entertain that he will spare a degenerate child, who has forfeited his birth-

(m) Luke xxiii. 31.

right, and is determined to continue in sin? Nay, can such a one expect any indulgence, as perhaps makes a jest of repentance and sanctification, and in the presumptuous depravity of his heart dares ask this impious question, “ If
 “ I am obliged to lead a life of piety and
 “ holiness, what necessity was there of Christ’s
 “ dying for me? What occasion is there for
 “ his imputed merit, if I do not sin, but lead
 “ a pious and godly life?”

Therefore, O sinner, forbear by an obstinate continuance in sin to spit on and mock him, who from a cordial love to thy immortal soul, hath suffered indignities, pain, and death; and who, without any reluctance or contradiction, permitted the sentence of temporal death to be passed on him, in order to deliver thee from the sentence of eternal death. Wilt thou still take a delight in sin, the expiation of which cost thy Mediator so much pain and sorrow? Behold his sacred face swelled by blows, and covered with blood! Behold his eyes quite sunk and weighed down with agony and want of sleep! Stand a while before this affecting spectacle; and with prayers and tears dwell on the consideration, that the Prince of Life was insulted, spit on, struck, and even condemned to die an ignominious death, till thou art made sensible of the heinousness of thy sins, and thy heart is filled with horror at the thought of them. Let it be a matter of unspeakable grief to thee, that thou hast so outraged the Son of
 God,

God, and as it were insulted the Lord of glory, and given thy vote for the sentence passed on him. Thus, the passion of Christ will lay in thee a true foundation for godly sorrow, and a sincere repentance. For, (again to make use of the pious Luther's words) " This is the
" proper, natural effect of our Saviour's passion,
" that it transforms men, as it were, into his
" likeness; so that as Christ suffered extreme
" tortures in soul and body for our sins, we
" also should, by the consideration of our
" manifold sins, be tortured in the mind and
" conscience. This is not the effect of mere
" words, but of deep reflection and serious de-
" testation of sin. Thus the passion of Christ
" performs its proper, natural, and effectual
" operation; it mortifies the old Adam, expels
" all sinful desires, all delight and confidence
" in the creatures. Then we are grieved in
" our consciences, and are displeased with our
" past sinful lives. But (to proceed in Luther's
" words) he who finds himself so obdurate
" and insensible, that Christ's passion works
" no such pious emotions in him, ought to
" fear that he does not turn his thoughts in-
" ward on himself, so as to know his own
" heart. For the only alternative is this, thou
" must be made conformable to the image
" and sufferings of Christ either in this life or
" that which is to come. At least, these terrors
" will overwhelm thee on thy death-bed.
" Thou shalt then shudder and tremble, and
" feel

“ feel all that Christ suffered on his cross.
 “ O dreadful situation for a dying man ! There-
 “ fore implore God, that he would mollify
 “ thy obdurate heart, and grant that thou
 “ mayest so meditate on Christ’s passion, as to
 “ bring forth its happy fruits in thee.” Let
 me intreat you, My dearly Beloved, to follow
 such good advice ; and be assured that you will
 never repent of it.

But we are not to rest here. When we are
 brought to a knowledge and sense of our sins,
 by considering the sufferings of Christ, we must
 again and again detest and abhor them, and
 again empty the oppressed conscience of them.
 And Oh, what an encouragement to faith and
 confidence in God arises from the condemnation
 of Christ ! For behold, O pious soul, which
 art inwardly terrified at hearing the sentence of
 death passed on the Son of God ; thou who
 sayest within thyself, If this be done in the
 green tree, what will become of me a dry and
 barren trunk ? thou who couldest abhor thy-
 self for having insulted the image of the invisible
 God ; thou who wouldest suffer any loss or in-
 conveniency whatever, rather than mock and
 outrage him a-fresh by new deliberate sins ; Be-
 hold, I say, thy Mediator ! Thou hast, indeed,
 deserved the sentence of death ; but thy Surety,
 out of his unspeakable love to thee, has ap-
 peared in thy stead, and has permitted it to be
 vicariously passed on himself, that thou mightest
 enjoy

enjoy eternal life. He has endured the accusations of false witnesses, that the accuser of thy brethren might be foiled at the Divine Tribunal. He was condemned as a blasphemer for acknowledging that he was the Son of God, in order to atone for man's impiety, who endeavoured to make himself a God, and that thou, through faith in his name, mightest be restored to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He did not hide his face from shame and spitting, that thou mightest with joy lift up thy face before the tribunal of God. The mockeries and insults, which he endured, have acquired thee a right to bliss and glory; and the strokes and blows to which he submitted have procured thee an exemption from the buffetings of Satan.

Rejoice then and be exceeding glad! Dost thou with a penitent heart believe on the condemned Son of God? then shalt thou not be condemned. He has been judged and sentenced to die, therefore thou shalt not come into judgement; but shalt pass from death unto life. Thy condemned Brother is exalted to the right hand of God, and will one day judge those who have judged him; but as for thee, if thou holdest out to the end in faith and good works, he will set thee on his right hand, and introduce thee into his endless joy and never-fading glory.

Hold out still a little longer in thy conflict against sin, and suffer not deceitful and wicked
lusts

lusts to have dominion over thee; for, in the condemnation of thy Surety, sentence of death was passed also on them. Be not ashamed of thy Saviour's reproach. Rejoice when, in following him, thou art thought worthy to suffer insults, mockery, and blows on account of his sacred truth; for he hath sanctified such insults and indignities, and appointed them as honorary marks to distinguish his followers from the rest of the world. Strive to imitate the blessed Jesus in his patience and gentleness, and pray to him, that he would impart to thee that placid, dove-like temper, and calm serenity with which he suffered reproach, and submitted to the most flagrant injustice. Boldly confess him before men, that he may also confess thee before his Father and the holy Angels. Love Him who has loved thee even unto death, till thou seest him face to face, when thou shalt eternally rejoice, and be transformed into the likeness of Him who was once despised and rejected of men, but now shines in the most effulgent glory.

T H E P R A Y E R.

O Thou condemned Lamb of God! eternal thanksgiving and praise be ascribed to thee for permitting the sentence of death to be passed on thee, that thou mightest acquire a right to eternal life for those who shall believe in thy name. Bless to all our souls this account of thy condemnation. May the words, 'He is 'guilty of death,' be as a thunder-clap in our ears, and strike our careless depraved hearts with a salutary terror, that they may be laid low in the dust, and brought to a godly sorrow and sincere repentance. But grant, that it may also be a balsam of life to all those afflicted and troubled consciences, which carry in them the sentence of death, and make thy Cross their refuge. Say unto them, Your heart shall live for ever. May the whole merit of thy passion be imputed to them, for the remission of their sins; and may they be rendered capable of imitating thy mildness, patience, and submission, and even willingly to take on them thy reproach and thy sufferings. Grant this for the sake of thy holy name. Amen.



I N D E X

I N D E X

To the THIRD VOLUME.

A.

Atonement, feast of, 132.

B.

Blood and water issuing from Christ's side, mystery of, 275. Of Christ, what it speaks, 288.

C.

Christ his sufferings on Mount Golgotha, 1. Led to his crucifixion, 9. Intent of his being crucified with robbers, 20. His penitential sermon, 31. seq. Why crucified on Mount Golgotha, 59. His last devotions, 201. His blood, what it speaks, 288.

Consideration on Jesus led to his crucifixion, 9. Consideration on the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, 57. On Christ's tasting the bitter potion, 68. On the sacrifice of Isaac, 81. On occurrences subsequent to Christ's crucifixion, 100. On dividing Christ's garments, 116. On the mental sufferings of Christ, 128. On Jesus's gifts while hanging on the cross, 152. On the last sufferings of the Lord Jesus, 178. On the last devotions of the Lord Jesus, 201. On the prodigies at the death of Christ, 232. On the indignities offered to Christ on the cross, 259. On the blood of sacrifices as typical, 280.

Cross, form of it, 14.

Crucifixion, manner of it, 70. The extraordinary pain attending it, Further account of it, 262.

D.

Doctrines deducible from the superscription on Christ's cross, 107.

Dying persons, examples set them, 175.

VOL. III.

D d

Death,

I N D E X.

Death, preparation for, 215.

Duties intimated by the place of Christ's crucifixion, 61.

E.

EXecution, ceremony at it, 102.

Eclipse at our Saviour's death, signification of it, 183.

Examination, self, 216.

F.

FAll of our first Parents, consequences of it, 275.

G.

GArments, the make of Christ's, 117.

Gift's, Christ's on the cross, 158, 168, 170.

God, his veracity, 97. Directs the circumstances of Christ's sufferings, 133.

Golgotha, Mount, account of it, 58. Golgotha, why appointed for Christ's crucifixion, 59.

H.

Human heart, wickedness of, 191.

I.

Jerusalem, its dreadful calamities, 43. Vast concourse there, 131. note

Jews, their terror, 44. Cruel treatment of them, 47.

Their custom towards criminals, 64, 102. Their devotion on new year's day, 86.

Impenitent sinners, advantages for them, 48.

Intercession, Christ's, for his enemies, 77. Observations on it, *ibid.*

Isaac, by the ancient Jews thought a type of the Messiah, 85.

Judea, state of it, 59.

Justification, 124.

L.

Luther, observation of, 119.

Legs, manner of breaking those of malefactors, 263.

Why those of Christ's not broken, 266.

Lambs, paschal, number of them killed in one day, 282. note. M.

I N D E X.

M.

- M**alefactors, how crucified, 70.
Mary, Virgin, her age when she died, 171.

O.

- O**bservations on Christ's crucifixion, 73. On his intercession, 77. On his suffering himself to be mocked, 136.

P.

- P**arallel of the sacrifice of Isaac with that of Christ, 86.
Penitent, who, 54.
Practical inferences, 97, 112, 163, 167, 171, 215, 228, 256, 267.
Prayers, 8, 30, 56, 80, 99, 127, 151, 177, 200, 231, 258, 280.
Prodigies at Christ's death, signification of them, 238.
Effect of them on the spectators, 249.
Potion, cordial given to criminals before their execution, 64.

R.

- R**omans, their custom concerning crucified criminals, 20, 36, 102.

S.

- S**anctification, 124, 125.
Sermon, penitential, of Christ, 31.
Soldiers, Roman, their common drink, 195.
Sick-bed, behaviour on, 215.
Sepulchres, Jewish, 246.
Simon of Cyrene, account of him, 23.
Sinners, advantages they may derive from Christ's admonition to the Jews, 48.
Stoning, custom at, 132.
Sufferings, of Christians, sanctified, 126.
Superscription on Christ's cross, why written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, 104. Mysteries of it, 111.

T.

- T**error, salutary, 51.
Thief, penitent, account of him, 153.
Thieves crucified with Christ, who they were, 19.

I N D E X.

Tiberius, his order concerning criminals, 11.

Titus, his cruel order, 47.

Tongues, 112.

Truths deduced from Christ's being eased of bearing his cross, 27. From Christ's admonition to the Jews, 48. From the potion given to Christ, 67. From the circumstances of his crucifixion, 73. From the superscription on Christ's cross, 107, 112. From Christ's garments, 122. From Christ's suffering himself to be mocked, 136, 148. From the penitent thief, 162, 167. From Christ's gifts on the cross, 171. From the effects of the prodigies at Christ's death, 256. From Christ's side being pierced, 278.

W.

Women lamenting Jesus, 35. His admonition to them, 37.

The END of the THIRD VOLUME.



